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A Study of Lived Experiences of African American Male Principals in Urban Elementary
Schools

April Brooks

Bellarmino University



RESULTS OF DISSERTATION DEFENSE

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Abstract

The cycle of low performance of African American males continues to eliminate the pool of African American male educators who can serve as role models for future generations (Hale, 1986; Noguera, 2003). The objective of this dissertation is to understand the lived experience of African-American male principals post *Brown v. Board of Education*, and how they perceive their leadership experience working in an urban elementary school setting by exploring their commitment to black children, specifically black males. The questions examine the experience of AA male principals, their beliefs, perceptions, cultural intersections, and use of cultural resources in relation to AA male students. This qualitative multi-case study utilizes critical race theory and draws on the work of Kofi Lomotey (1987, 1993) and his findings of homophily in African American principals. The five participants were drawn from a county in the Southeast region of the United States that serves approximately 48,242 elementary students of which 8,833 are AA male students. Findings are presented as six interrelated themes which indicate the importance of servant leadership and the ways in which participants emphasized the role of building relationships with AA male students.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Young Black Male

Steady strong nobody's gonna like what I'm pumpin'
 But it is wrong to keep someone from learning something
 So get up its time to start nation building
 I'm fed up, we gotta start teaching children
 That they can be all they wanna be
 There's much more to life than just poverty

Words of wisdom
 They shine upon the strength of a nation
 Conquer the enemy on with education
 Protect they self, reach with what you wanna do
 Know they self, teach what we been through
 -Tupac Shakur (1991)

Problem Statement

The rapper Tupac Shakur's lyrics provide a context to the state of Black men in America. Tupac highlights the importance of education for the success of African Americans (AA) and how America has stifled the progress of African American males specifically by limiting their education and ability to, in turn, challenge the constraints of poverty. The music of the 1990s gives voice to the problems that African American males face while struggling to prosper in a racist society where they confront murder, rape, assault, robbery, and false imprisonment (Nas, 2002; Public Enemy, 1990; Shakur, 1991). The introductory lyrics to this chapter illustrate the importance of empowering Black men through education and promoting the strength and bond between them by uniting them. The discourse on African American males as vulnerable and in a state of conflict spreads across music, literature, education, and political discussions. Essentially, these discourses promote the need for African American males to help other African American males actualize and internalize their American dream (Dubois, 1903; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Muhammad, 1973; Nas, 2002; Public Enemy, 1990).

Statistically, African American male students continue to fail in our current education system (Kafele, 2012). According to Lomotey (1993), AA males are underperforming on several measures such as standardized tests, high school completion rates, and special education placement in comparison to their white counterparts (p. 395), and the negative patterns have sustained over 25 years (Schott Foundation, 2012; U.S. Civil Rights Data, 2014). The achievement gap between AA males and white students is an issue that many have studied, and policy makers and school districts are still seeking answers (Haycock, 2001; Howard, 2013; Maxwell, 2012; Nishioka, 2013). This cycle of poor academic performance of African American males continues to eliminate the pool of those African American males who graduate and serve as role models for future generations (Hale, 1986; Hozien, 2016; Noguera, 2003).

According to Hale (1986), historically the failure rates of AA students is due to the mismatch of the school background to the social, cultural, and experiential background of minority children. Likewise Noguera (2003) asserts, structural and cultural factors should be examined to address underperformance of AA males and to further explore how these factors influence the identity formation of AA male students within a school context (p. 452). Educators need to be more understanding of AA males' background and its relationship to their educational performance (Hale, 1986; Howard, 2010). The graduation rates suggest that there is an apparent problem: In 2012, the U.S. high school graduation rate for AA male was 51%, according to the Schott Foundation, the high school graduation gap between AA males and their white counterparts continues to widen, increasing by 21 points in 2012-2013 from 19 points in 2009-2010 (Schott Foundation, 2012). Clearly, schools are failing to support and nurture AA males consistently (Howard, 2013; Noguera, 2003).

More than 50 years after the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) ruling, AA male principals are scarce across the nation. The groundbreaking ruling is considered to have caused thousands of

African American principals to be demoted or fired from their positions causing them to lose their authority to advocate for Black children during desegregation (Tillman, 2008). Tillman (2004, 2008) is the seminal researcher who exposed much of the devastating effects of Brown v. Board of Education ruling on the black community. African American leadership depended upon a moral imperative that involved a battle against social barriers of poverty and racial inequities (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). The scarcity of AA principals has been a problem since the Brown v. Board of Education ruling and did not stabilize until 1982 (Brown, 2005). The hiring of AA principals reached a peak in the 1980s but has declined markedly in recent years (Valverde, 2002), since 2010 the number of administrators has declined by 10.5 percent or 90,000 nearly 7,000 a year (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), states should recruit more male and minority teacher candidates due to the fact that 17% of elementary and secondary enrollments are AA children nationwide, with AA teachers only making up about 7% of the teaching force (NCES, 2010). Although approximately 20% of the population is AA in public schools, AA male teachers are merely 1% of the teaching force (Lewis, 2006; NCES, 2010). According to Madkins (2011) the number of AA teachers has dramatically declined since 50% of the teaching force was AA prior to the Brown v. Board of Education ruling.

According to Tillman (2008), the amount of literature dedicated to the study of AA principals and their commitment to the education of Black children is lacking before and after Brown v. Board of Education, especially in regard to same racial and cultural affiliation (p. 171). The lack of Black leadership narratives stifles the ability to improve schools for children in poverty and children of color (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 591). Pre Brown v. Board of Education AA principals felt a sense of obligation to serve their communities by educating other Blacks to become literate and played dual roles as educators and activists for Black children (Tillman, 2008). The purpose of Brown v. Board

Education was to provide equity amongst schools, but it has not shown sustained progress. Initially, the achievement gap decreased by half between the 1970s and 1980s but began to widen during the 1990s (Haycock, 2001); although the achievement gap narrowed in 2007 compared to previous assessments, AA students are still performing below their White counterparts on all assessments (Vanneman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Rahman, 2009).

Even though segregation became illegal, Black and White students continue to receive unequal education experiences because the nation lacks the resolve to afford students an equitable education despite cultural, racial, or socio-economic status (Lemons-Smith, 2008). Although schools are integrated, AA male students continue to underperform academically and socially, higher rates of placement in special education classes and expulsion from school (Borja, 2001; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Tifft & Henderson, 1990). African American males are also less likely to be placed in rigorous classes such as honor or Advanced Placement courses (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Grantham, 2004a; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Oakes, 1985; Pollard, 1993). In addition to academic concerns, AA males from urban areas are especially vulnerable to be identified as disruptive due to the disproportionality of behavior referrals and overrepresentation for emotional support services (Irvin & Hudley, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005). According to the United States Department of Education (2009), at the end of high school AA students reading and math skills are at the level of White students in the 8th grade. These startling statistics compel the need for research on AA males and how the education systems has “fallen woefully short in engaging AA males” academically to maximize their full potential (Howard, 2013, p. 60).

The impact of AA teachers is important to research. A study conducted in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania found that students with a teacher of the same race in mathematics and reading scored three to four points higher on standardized reading and mathematics tests than those who had teachers

of other races (Borja 2001; Dee, 2001; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015). Other earlier research found similar significance in regard to race for AA students (Murnane 1975). Teachers, however, do not operate in isolation. Teachers' morale and professionalism and the level of concern for students is influenced by the leadership of the school; therefore, understanding the principal's role in leading the teachers who teach AA males is essential to understanding academic success of AA males (Lomotey, 1989; Wolfgang, 2011). Also without the recruitment and retention of AA male teachers, hiring AA male principals is highly unlikely (Lewis, 2006). Without focus on research related to the impact of AA educators on AA students, the achievement gap may continue to grow between AA male and their white counterparts (Brown, 2005; Lemons-Smith, 2008; Noguera, 2003).

Many studies investigate the need for AA teachers to meet the needs of growing minority populations (Madkins, 2011; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). Essentially, the need for AA teachers corresponds to the need for AA principals since most states require that principals have teaching experience (Roberts, 2009). The low number of AA teachers will negatively affect the number of AA principals, for example, only 10 % of principals are AA in U.S. public schools (NCES, 2012). In 2011-2012 public elementary schools, 64 percent of the elementary population were women, leaving men as 36% of the elementary principal population (NCES, 2012). The comparison of male principals in comparison to the number of female principals illustrates an alarming gap at the elementary level. Nationally there are 3.5 million public school teachers in the U.S. but merely 17% of the teaching workforce are minorities (NCES, 2010). Research suggests AA educators are extremely vital to AA students (King, 1993; Lomotey, 1987; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). One of the consistent implications in the literature is the need for Black male youth to be exposed to social and emotional development of Black male leaders in different contexts of their lives that includes the school and the community (Howard, 2013). In addition to Black male leaders serving as role models for

social development, research suggests that AA principals, despite the low numbers, may have positive effects on AA students' academic achievement but further research is needed (Lomotey, 1987; Murnane, 1975).

According to Lomotey (1993), increasing school performance is key to improving the livelihood for a group of individuals so they are able to make greater contributions to society (p. 396) and other researchers reiterate the importance of education in changing student trajectory, particularly for AA children (Anyon, 2005; Hale, 2001; Jenkins, 2006; Kunjufu, 2013).

Lomotey's research (1987) concerning AA principals in predominantly Black schools states there are three tenets of AA principals that lend positive results for AA students: compassion, commitment to the community, and confidence in AA students. These tenets, along with similar communication styles, defined as homophily are attributed to the AA principals' influence upon AA students (Lomotey, 1987, p. 175). Banks (2016) defines these familiar communication styles or dialects as social registers "that function on a continuum from very informal to very formal" (p. 255). He asserts that this communication between language communities is empowering and does not diminish the use of Standard School English (Banks, 2016, p. 256). Communication could be a powerful characteristic of AA principals' leadership style that could attribute to closing the achievement gap that principals face mounting pressure from both federal and state government to decrease (Ansell, 2011; Haycock, 2001);.

Purpose of Study

The objective of this dissertation is to understand the lived experience of African American male principals post Brown v. Board of Education (1954), and how they perceive their leadership style

working in an urban elementary school setting by exploring their commitment to Black children, specifically Black males.

The principalship of African Americans in desegregated schools has not been researched extensively, especially in urban school districts (Brown & Beckett, 2007). According to Noguera (2003, p. 433), we know very little about the AA Black male experience and the expectations that affect their performance in school. African Americans and AA male principals have a unique perspective based on their race, experiences, and gender and the fact that they are an underrepresented group in the position. AA male principals will provide a unique perspective in regard to organizational structures and policies that affect Black educators and students. Other research indicates that, during the segregation of Black schools with mostly Black students and staff they were able to communicate with students and families effectively (McGeeBanks, 2001; Pollard, 1997; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Tillman, 2004). The experience of AA male principals is explored in this qualitative study through in-depth interviews and observations in order to understand their leadership style, cultural intersections, communication and use of cultural resources in relation to AA male students.

Principal duties include navigating and assessing the curriculum and staffing employees at the school, and teachers are responsible for effectively implementing the curriculum to meet the students' needs (Eilers & D'Amico, 2012). The AA male principal's role in the academic development of AA male students is essential although it is missing in current and past literature on AA leadership. Tillman (2008) suggests that culture is a significant part of AA leadership based on works of Hilliard (2000), Lomotey (1993), and Walker (2003). Therefore characteristics of AA male principals' leadership style are examined in this dissertation to find reoccurring themes of their personal experience, beliefs, cultural intersections, communication and use of cultural resources and their impact and influence on AA male students.

Significance of the Study

The lack of AA school leadership may contribute to low academic performance. According to Madkins (2011), more research must be done to address the demographic disparity between minority teachers and students, especially with the dramatic decline in AA teachers. Likewise researchers note the absences of AA fathers and the need for male role models for Black male children (ABS staff, 2013; Earl & Lohmann, 1978; Kunjufu, 2007; National Center for Fathering, 2016; Rosiak, 2012; Tifft & Henderson, 1990). According to Tifft and Henderson (1990), the lack of male role models leads Black boys to view academic success as a feminine quality (p. 83).

Not only do AA students lack role models in their homes and community, but there is also a gender disparity in their education especially in the early grades. According to Kunjufu (2007), many boys will go from K-3, K-6, or even K-8 without having the experience of being taught by a male teacher, particularly an AA male teacher (p. 128). In 2011-2012 public schools, male teachers only accounted for 24% of the teaching population, which is a 5% decrease from 1987 (NCES, 2012).

The literature suggests that the lack of role models is a key component of the underperformance of Black males (Brown, 2009; Chmelynski, 2006; Howard, 2012; Kafele, 2012; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) only 50% of Black children in the United States live in households with a father figure present. In comparison, 32% of White families who live below the poverty line live in two parent homes whereas Black families only 12% live with two parents (Rosiak, 2012). These data suggests there is a clear absence of strong adult male presence for AA children. According to Kafele (2012), a transformative leader in urban secondary schools in New Jersey, role models are essential to the success of AA male students:

Although there are many strategies that good teachers of any gender and ethnicity can implement on a classroom level to support the success of Black male students, I believe that to maximize our classroom efforts, we must ensure that young Black males have opportunities to learn from role models whom they can identify with (p. 70).

Kafele proactively started an empowerment program for young Black boys to fill that void of father figures at his school through mentorship and guest speakers. Many AA males do not see themselves living beyond the age of 21 (Kafele, 2012). AA role models provide AA male students with opportunities to interact with AA males who are successful, encouraging them look at their own education differently and enhancing their probability of success (Kafele, 2012).

Not only is race a significant part of the study; gender is another relevant aspect of this AA research. AA males have race and gender issues to combat that lead to deficits in education performance. Boys are overrepresented in high school dropouts, special education, and generally underperform in comparison to girls (Legeweie & DiPrete, 2012). According to Legeweie and DiPrete (2012), boys' lack of academic performance is not solely based on class background as some suggest but is dependent upon the schools' and classrooms' local cultural environment. Teacher pedagogy is also pertinent to the success of boys through modifying student behavior and improving the academic climate. For example, academic competition is one effective teaching method that is beneficial for boys (Legeweie & DiPrete, 2012).

Based on the need for AA male presence in schools, qualitative research on AA principals and their perceived influence may inform hiring practices for school districts to increase the hiring of AA principals. Over the past 20 years, there has been an intensive effort to hire more minority teachers in urban districts (Bodfield, 2009; Jan, 2006). This effort is attributed to the increased amount of student

diversity along with federal court orders in the '70s and '80s (Jan, 2006; Morris, 2001). According to Madkins (2011), the dramatic decline in minority teachers after the passing of Brown vs. Board ruling suggests there is a demographic disparity; thus, there should be an intentional focus on AA teachers. One could presume if minority teachers are not heavily recruited there will be a small pool of AA principals to assume leadership roles, making this study vital to the research base.

The research questions address the major concepts that affect AA educators and their role as leaders to AA male students. The questions examine the experience of AA male principals and their leadership style, cultural intersections, and use of cultural resources in relation to AA male students. AA male principals will provide information about their experience as educators and their relationships with AA male students in regard to teaching and learning.

The research questions to be answered are:

1. What are the experiences of five AA male elementary principals in a large urban district located in the Southeastern United States post Brown vs. Board of Education?
2. What are the leadership styles and characteristics of these AA male principals?
3. How do these AA male principals understand their ability to interact using cultural resources and cultural intersections with AA male students and their families?

Limitations

There are two limitations of the study. The study included five AA male principals; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized for the entire population. One of the five principals did not participate in the second observation or the focus group interview due to other commitments. Although the research is useful for informing the literature about AA principals' perspective on impact and influences on AA males, students were not included as part of the study since the study focused solely

on the educator's perspectives (Brown, 2007). An assumption of this study is that role of AA principals may provide insight to a difficult problem of AA males and the achievement gap. The lack of student perspective will be a limitation; however, this study is attempting understand how the leadership of AA principals may impact AA students and families.

Definition of Terms

This study is based upon three major theories: Critical Race Theory, Homophily, and Symbolic Interactionism Theory. Each theory helps to explore and understand the experience of AA male principals through their position and perceived impact on AA male students and their families through interaction and communication.

1. Critical Race Theory- a framework used to examine race and racism in law specifically after the Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) decision and its impact on education in a K-12 setting. Critical Race Theory (CRT) suggests that racism is a part of daily society and as such it continues to insure the political superiority of racially marginalized groups (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 260).
2. Homophily- defined by Kochman (as cited in Lomotey, 1987) as people with similar beliefs, values, attributes, education, or social status tend to interact and communicate more effectively due to their like-mindedness. The relationship between AA administrators and students has been described by Lomotey (1987) using homophily to define their cultural similarities and unique interactions (p. 175).
3. Symbolic Interactionism Theory- provides a work for understanding that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them, the meaning is derived from one's social interaction with others, and these meanings are handled

through an interpretative process. This framework is a lens to examine root images that represent human society and conduct (Blumer, 1969, p. 2-6).

4. Black and African American (AA) are terms used interchangeably throughout the document.

Summary

The lack of recent research on African American male principals and their influence is apparent. The literature suggests that culture has an influence on the leadership style of AA principals (Lomotey, 1987) who in turn impact the teacher's ability to increase AA student achievement by emphasizing multicultural education and equity pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010; Nieto, 2010). The issues addressed in the study inform readers of the importance of AA male principals in schools and their relationship with AA male students. By understanding the experience of AA male principals and the cultural intersections and beliefs about AA male students, this research has the potential to identify new approaches for addressing culturally responsive teaching for AA male students, and suggest policies to recruit and retain AA male administrators especially in schools with a large population of AA male students. Statistics suggests that several states: Hawaii, California, New Mexico, and Texas and cities: Washington DC, Houston, Miami, and Los Angeles are majority people of color (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The increasing number of minorities across America establishes a need for research on improving education for students of color.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

“Black Man”

First man to die
For the flag we now hold high
[Crispus Attucks] Was a Black man

Heart surgery
Was first done successfully
By a Black man *[Dr Daniel Hale Williams]*

Who was the man who helped design the nation's capitol, made the first clock to
give time in America and wrote the first almanac?
Benjamin Banneker - a Black man

We pledge allegiance
All our lives
To the magic colors
Red, blue and white
But we all must be given
The liberty that we defend
For with justice not for all men
History will repeat again
It is time we learned
This World Was Made For All Men
-Stevie Wonder (1976)

Stevie Wonder’s “Black Man” is a call for change; justice for all men, including the Black man who has contributed to America in many ways. The song celebrates the innovative mind of the Black man, yet the Black man continues to struggle to be successful in the United States. African American males continue to be the focal point of conversation in education because they are a group with startling data that shows they are the most “severely and disproportionately affected by school failures than others” (Howard, 2013, p. 54). According to several researchers, education has failed Black children, especially Black males, because of the lack of research and attention to how Black males learn and operate in school settings (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Howard, 2013; Kafele, 2010; Lemons-Smith, 2008).

This literature review will provide an in-depth look at principal leadership from the perspective of AA males in that role at the elementary level. First section examines the quality of principals defined as *reculturing* an innovative approach to tackling school change (Fullan, 2001). This discussion is based on current research regarding reculturing and relevant theories. Secondly, characteristics of effective AA male elementary principals is discussed and their positive impact on AA male students, including a discussion of Servant Leadership. The discussion on AA male elementary principals includes the cyclical relationship between the development, recruitment, and pedagogy of AA male teachers. Third, several studies and programs were reviewed to illustrate the benefits of their unique relationship in a school context and the complexities of gender and race. The chapter ends with a description of the theoretical framework for the study: homophily, critical race theory, and symbolic interactionism. Each is explored as a foundation for the cultural interaction, communication, and relationship between AA male principals and AA male students.

Reculturing

Change is an integral part of leadership. According to Michael Fullan (2001), leadership is not solving the solvable problems; it is helping others solve problems that they thought to be impossible. He describes this idea as *reculturing* by changing the way people think and what they value (Fullan, 2001). The expectation of the urban principal is to be equipped to deal with diversity, instructional leadership, and teacher empowerment (Kunjufu, 2012; Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gomez, 2000). Diversity includes race, culture, and language of students since the U.S. is rapidly changing in demographics (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Shen, Rodriguez-Campos, & Rincones-Gomez, 2000). The expectation is also that teachers and principals are diversified to mirror student population so that students have role models that look like them (Brubaker, 1995; Hozien, 2016; Jones, 2002; Madkins, 2011; Nishioka, 2013).

Fullan (2001) describes the leadership change process that must take place with principals and staff members:

Leading in a culture of change means creating a culture (not just a structure) of change. It does not mean adopting innovations, one after another; it does mean producing the capacity to seek, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices—all the time, inside the organization as well as outside it. Reculturing is a contact sport that involves hard, labor-intensive work. It takes time and indeed never ends. This why successful leaders need energy, enthusiasm, and hope, and why they need moral purpose... (p. 44)

The *reculturing* process is a novel way of thinking. The principal achieves this change by reminding the teacher of their commitment to students, that necessitates improving their craft of teaching through study, practice, and knowledge sharing (Fullan, 2002). According to Fullan (2002), the principal is the lead learner who models “lifelong learning,” consistently encourages action research, and builds leadership capacity within the school. According to Dillard (1995), principals have three roles in regard to cultural management interpreting, representing, and authenticating school culture relationships.

According to Kunjufu (2013), principals play a critical role in the reculturing process:

The most important player in the school is the principal. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to change school culture for the better with an ineffective CEO-type of principal. A school’s transformation needs a transformational principal. Schools need transformational teachers as well. Just as one or two teachers can negative change the

culture of a class, just a couple of teachers can negatively affect the culture of the school. It is imperative that the majority speak up (p. 34)

Many researchers affirm Kunjufu's (2013) beliefs, that principals have a critical role in building a positive school culture for students and staff (Banks, 2010; Fullan, 2002; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010) .

Role of the principal

Leadership is broadly considered as intentional influence over others (Yukl, 1981). According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), leadership is a worthwhile risk because leaders can improve the lives of people around them better. Strength and influence are characteristics of a leader not solely due to his power but his ability to empower others (Lee & Nie, 2014; Maxwell, 2001). According to (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015), system leaders empower others to move from reacting to the problem to shaping a vision for the future. Principals have the power to transform schools through quality instruction for all students although it is difficult. Leadership at the elementary level is critical because it is the foundation for learning and building one's commitment to learning (Ferrandino, 2001; Moore, 2009). According to Connelly (2008), the expectation of the principal is to be a transformational leader that shares the vision and sustains it. Due to the complexity of the position, the principal must demonstrate courage, vision, and skill to maintain effective instruction for students and adults (Connelly, 2008). As Fullan (2002) explains, "Thus we need leaders who can create fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and of the teaching profession itself" (p. 18).

Elementary principals were faced with a unique challenge due to the demands of accountability testing and the overall demands of the position (Ferrandino, 2001). This challenge continues to this day the typical amounts of hours-at-work for elementary principals averaged 54 hours a week or nine hours a day (Ferrandino, 2001). On top of the longer hours, the overall enrollment has increased to an average of 425 students and nearly 30 teachers, more than the typical amount over the past decades

(Ferrandino, 2001). In the elementary grades, a gender shift has occurred: 65% of principals with five years of experience or less are women (Ferrandino, 2001). However there is still a shortage of minorities at the elementary level although the minority student population continues to rise (Ferrandino, 2001). Ferrandino (2001) attributes the shortage of elementary principals to inadequate compensation, job-related stress, and time fragmentation. Typical elementary principals face a difficult task of competing with other types of school such as magnet and private schools, getting involved in the school community, integrating technology, and meeting the needs of a diverse school population (Ferrandino, 2001). As the baby boomer generation retires, the attrition rate of principals could reach 60% (Ferrandino, 2001). Some of the stress may be caused by the demands of high-stakes testing. Elementary principals may find their “job hanging in the balance” if they do not achieve satisfactory test scores, which can lead to influencing teachers to “teach to the test” (Ferrandino, 2001, p. 442).

According to a review of research published by the Institute for Education Science (IES) principals have positive effects on overall student achievement (Lampkin, Folsom, & Herrington, 2015). The IES report indicated that 8th grade students randomly assigned to one-on-one conversations with the principal scored higher on the state English Language Arts test. Moreover, 11 qualitative studies found similar results that suggested principals’ impact student achievement. The studies reviewed by IES included all 50 states, 329 school districts, and approximately 8,363 schools. Of the 51 studies 38 quantitative and 11 qualitative studies demonstrated a positive relationship between certain principal leadership styles and student achievement.

Silva et al. research (2011) found a direct effect between school leadership and student achievement through interactions with students. Students who were not proficient were assigned one of two interventions. The experimental group received individual 15 minute long achievement based conversations with the principal a month before the test and the control group received 15 minute long

one on one conversations after the test. The findings indicated that students in the experimental group scored higher than the predicted outcome in comparison with the control group.

The Lampkin, Folsom, and Herrington (2015) review of the studies described principals in three ways: precursors, behaviors, and leadership styles. Precursors are defined as principals' experience and educational attainment; it showed a positive correlation with student achievement. Principal behaviors are defined as instructional management, internal relations, and organization management. Leadership styles described as distributive, collaborative, collective, collegial, learning centered, and transformational. These styles were examined by the study and provided mixed results. Although evidence from the studies showed mixed results. The precursors—an integral part of this dissertation, indicated a positive correlation, which is an integral part of this dissertation. Lampkin, Folsom, & Herrington, 2015 indicates that principal precursors and leadership impacts students; thus this research study will specifically examine AA male principal's leadership style and experience post Brown vs. Board of Education and the potential impact on AA male student achievement.

Other responsibilities of urban principals include meeting the social needs of students (Durden, 2008). Social needs include challenges that stem from increased diversity, low socio-economic status (SES) students, and learning deficits (Durden, 2008). Urban principals deal with intense scrutiny about low performing students despite lack of human resources (Durden, 2008). Several researchers emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive teaching to meet the needs of diverse student populations (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2010). Likewise, Lomotey (1987, 1993) suggests multicultural education and commitment to the learning of all students as a strength of AA principals specifically.

Principals as servant leaders. The type of leadership described by Lomotey's research (1987) aligns with the characteristics of servant leaders. The term servant leader began with the work of Robert

Greenleaf (1977); who is considered the seminal researcher in this area of leadership (Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership embodies a high level of commitment to students where leaders place the needs of others before their own needs (Greenleaf, 1977). According to Greenleaf (1977), “The servant leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve to serve first. Then conscious choice brings on to aspire to lead” (p. 27). Unlike other leadership styles the goal is to serve the followers not the organizations (Greenleaf, 1977).

According to Dierendonck (2011), serving is the gateway to leading but leading also requires serving; therefore, they are exchangeable. His research asserts that leading goes beyond facilitating the work of the organization; it requires the leader to immerse himself in the work. Spears (1995, 1998) further defined these characteristics originating from Greenleaf (1977). Dierendonck’s research (2011) identifies 10 characteristics of the servant-leader. Table 1 presents each characteristic and its definition as it relates to servant leadership:

Table 1

Servant Leadership Characteristics

Characteristic	Definition
Listening	servant leaders clarify the will of a group by listening receptively to what is being said;
Empathy	servant leaders strive to understand and empathize with others;
Healing	servant leaders have the potential for healing self and others;
Awareness	servant leadership is strengthened by general awareness, and especially self-awareness;
Persuasion	servant leaders rely upon persuasion, rather than positional authority, in making decision within an organization;
Conceptualization	servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams;
Foresight	servant leaders have the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation in the future;
Stewardship	servant leaders' first and foremost commitment is to serve the needs of others;
Commitment to the growth of people	servant leaders are deeply committed to the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of each and every individual within the institution; and
Building community	servant leaders seek to identify mean of building community among those who work with a given institution.

Note. Adapted from "A correlation of servant leadership, leader trust, and organizational trust," by E. E. Joseph, B. E. Winston, 2005, *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 26, p.10. Copyright 2005 by the American Psychological Association.

The characteristics of servant leadership reflect the core values of AA leadership presented in several research studies (Foster, 2005; Lomotey, 1987; Tillman, 2004). The research of Kofi Lomotey (1987) emphasizes that AA principals have a strong commitment to AA children, this directly relates to the servant leadership characteristics of commitment to the growth of the people. Lomotey (1987) asserts that AA principals value serving AA children to enhance their educational experience. Similarly Tillman (2004) states that AA principals “served as models of servant leadership,” (p. 105) who felt compelled to transfer the knowledge of literacy throughout the Black community. Likewise, Foster (2005) describes AA principals as leaders who embody a moral purpose to help others rise from slavery by educating others through literacy education (p. 695). Tillman’s (2004) and Foster’s (2005) research suggest links to the servant leadership characteristics of building community, AA principals felt obligated to the build a literate community.

Beyond the moral imperative, servant leadership also necessitates a high level of trust from followers. According to Joseph and Winston (2005), trust is essential between the servant leader and their followers. Greenleaf also asserted that trust is a key part of servant leadership because “the only sound basis for trust is for people to have the solid experience of being served by their institutions” (p. 83). Greenleaf (1977) believed that trust legitimized leadership, and true servant leaders lead by example to gain trust. Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson, & Jinks (2007) research study of principals identified as servant leaders examined their leadership practices by using the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (SASLP). The sample population included 330 elementary principals, 151 middle school principals, and 264 high school principals who received the survey. The instrument range of scores was 85 to 168; therefore, those who were under 145 were considered non-servant leaders. Of the sample 112 principals who returned the survey, those who rated themselves over 145

were considered servant leaders. Three teachers were randomly selected from each principals' school and given the Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI). The results indicated that principals that rated themselves high on the use of servant leadership characteristics were also rated significantly higher by their teachers on the five best leadership practices: challenging, inspiring, enabling, modeling, and encouraging. The study had several implications for principals: the better a principal understands teachers' expectations, the more likely the principal can fulfill the expectations of the role. The servant leaders were rated highest on modeling, next leading by example and enabling others to act, and then encouraging the heart of others. This research demonstrates that teachers value a principal's ability to lead by example and model the work they expect of teachers as indicated by Dierendonck's research (2011). Also, this research reaffirmed the moral purpose of servant leadership described by Lomotey (1987), Foster (2005), and Tillman (2004) through the value teachers placed on encouraging the heart of others. Dierendonck's research (2011) indicates that servant leadership is an effective leadership style and enhances teacher perception of principal effectiveness.

Principals as disciplinarians. Principals also have a responsibility to maintain safe schools through fair discipline practices. Since many school districts have enacted zero tolerance policies, those inequitable discipline practices have negatively affected AA male students (Browne-Dianis, 2011). Zero Tolerance was defined as a non-negotiable punishment for specific misbehaviors, but evolved into harsh disciplinary practices excluding students from learning for a range of behaviors (Browne-Dianis, 2011). Despite critiques that have identified zero tolerance policies as "...overly harsh or that seem to unfairly target students from some racial, gender, and ethnic groups" (Shah, 2011, p. 1), school districts feel a need to implement stringent discipline policies to ensure school safety (Shah, 2011, p. 12). In Washington D.C., the public school system reevaluated their zero tolerance policy due to the number of drug and alcohol offenses (Curriculum Review, 2011). The school districts' intentions had been to

promote school safety, even though it resulted in too many students out of school (Shah, 2011). These policies are negatively impacting students, especially minorities: “The data show that punitive, exclusionary practices have a disproportionate and growing impact on youth of color” (Browne-Dianis, 2011, p. 24). Data suggests that administrators are not making equitable decisions in regard to student discipline; for example, a study conducted by UCLA Civil Rights Project (as cited in Kelman, 2013), found black students are three times more likely to be suspended than their white counterparts.

Due to criticism of zero tolerance policies, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Attorney General’s Office are taking a closer look at the disproportionality (Shah, 2011). The Department of Education’s goal is to align civil rights with school disciplinary measures. Daniel J. Losen, the policy associate at the Civil Rights Center, analyzed the 2006 data collected by the U.S. Department of Education and found a disproportionate number of AA middle school students had been suspended compared to their white counterparts, with 28% of AA boys suspended compared to 10% of white boys (Shah, 2011). In addition to disproportionately applied disciplinary measures, academic disparities exist in level of experience of the teachers: “Compounding the disproportionality problem is that many minority students have less-experienced teachers than their white counterparts” (Shah, 2011, p. 12). Inexperienced teachers usually send students to the office due to their inability to manage their classroom. The office visit is ineffective for changing student’s behavior. Mr. Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education under the Obama administration, asserted: “Children who need the most too often get the least. It is a civil rights issue, an economic security issue, and a moral issue,” said (Shah, 2011, p. 12).

In Texas, data indicated African American special education students are 3.5 times more likely to be referred to in-school suspension and 6 more times likely to receive out-of-school suspension and four times more likely to be referred to alternative school, and three times more likely to be expelled

(Fowler, 2011, p. 18). Statewide, Texas data indicated that African American students are referred for misbehavior that is both less serious and more subjective than their white peers (Fowler, 2011, p. 18). This further affirms the negative consequences of zero tolerance policies on AA students.

Other options exist for improving school disciplinary practices through research-based strategies that reduce the number of suspensions and help improve overall school culture (Fowler, 2011, p. 18). Addressing student behaviors is not the only way to reduce suspensions. Losen (as cited in Shah, 2011) suggests that administrators address poor classroom management and make disaggregated discipline data available to the staff. Finding a solution to the adverse effects of zero tolerance is being done in a variety of ways across the nation, but the key is training educators to successfully manage challenging classroom environments (Fowler, 2011, p. 19).

According to Fowler (2011), without meaningful behavior interventions at school, drop out and academic failure put youth on a path to future criminal activity where whole communities pay the price (p. 19). Fowler (2011) suggests that the courtroom is not the place to learn valuable life lessons in regards to dealing with frustration and hostile emotions; school is the best environment for one to learn how to manage emotions that are part of development. Zero tolerance policies disturb the caring environment of American schools, according to Browne-Dianis (2011): “Tolerance is exactly what our children need—not only to learn and survive, but also to thrive” (p. 27). Lomotey (1987) describes compassion as a beneficial quality of AA principals that could help curb problems such as lack of tolerance for AA students. According to Nishioka (2013), students who have positive relationships with staff members are less likely to be suspended. Administrative leadership characteristics such as tolerance and an understanding of social and emotional development could positively impact students by providing them a caring and safe environment.

Successful school principals provide teachers with professional development on culturally responsive classroom management and implement progressive discipline to ensure safety of all students (Brackett et al., 2011; Nishioka, 2013). Disciplinary action can lead to loss of instructional time for many AA males, but strong leadership paired with culturally responsive classroom practices can eliminate many of the disparities in school discipline and help close the achievement gap (Nishioka, 2013).

Principals' influence on students. “It has been observed that the principal is second only to the teacher in his or her impact on the student” (Fullan, 2010, p. 14); therefore, the instructional decisions that principals make impact the student through instructional practices and school culture. Fullan (2010) suggests that principals' effect on students begins with the teachers. Fullan outlines six steps to drive instructional change:

- ready-fire-aim change savvy;
- participate as a learner;
- instructional focus;
- develop others;
- network and system engaged;
- realizing moral purpose;

The two steps that directly relate to the present study of AA male principals and their beliefs are instructional focus and developing others in relation to AA male students. Instructional focus pertains to students receiving quality instruction, and developing others includes the development of teachers through recruitment and mentoring and the growth and development of students.

Instructional focus. Instructional focus suggests that achieve results for every student by promoting individualized learning aligned with the instructional core (Fullan, 2010). Job embedded

professional development and the absence of initiative overload keep the school focused on a small number of core priorities. Other research suggests that principals act as instructional leaders playing a key role in improving the academic performance of students (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Cotton & Savard, 1980; Fullan, 2002, 2010; Roberts, 2009). For example, through instructional leadership principals can reduce the under representation of Black male students in gifted and talented programs and advanced level classes through staff development (Ford, 1995; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Ford & Harris, 1996; Grantham, 1997; Robinson, Vega, Moore III, Mayes, & Robinson, 2014). Statistics indicate 8.44% of gifted and talented students are African American, of the 8.44% only 3.65% are African American males (Bonner & Jennings, 2007). The literature suggests that collaboration, teacher effectiveness, teacher evaluation, gifted program development and implementation, grade advancement, and curriculum policies and practices are essential to the principal's role in gifted education (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Grantham & Ford, 1998; Roeper, 1986; Taylor, 1987). Through instructional leadership principals can positively influence the representation of Black students in gifted and advanced level classes and improve their overall education experience (Grantham & Ford, 1998).

Developing others. Minority leaders were largely omitted from research in educational leadership until the late 1970s (McGee Banks, 1997). Minorities are underrepresented in leadership positions (McGee Banks, 1997; Brown, 2005) and in promotions to administrative positions (Brown, 2005; Fenwick & Akua, 2013; Tillman, 2004). Therefore there is limited research on the impact of AA male principals on AA students, specifically AA males. It is acknowledged in research that most AA principals are placed in single race schools in urban districts (Brown, 2005) although they may have unique qualities that would be beneficial to other races. According to Brown (2005), due to high percentages of AA students in urban school districts, leadership theory, preparation, and practice

should include a broader perspective of the scholarship and knowledge of AAs. Discourse on effective school leadership should be centered on improving student achievement from African American perspectives (Hilliard, 1997; Tillman, 2008). The lack of AA leaders has a measurable influence on the lack of teachers who enter the profession, and the absence of mentoring AA teachers into leadership positions (Foster, 2004).

Lomotey's (1987) research suggest that AA principals play a key role in the improvement of AA student achievement. Lomotey's study (1987) of three AA principals in AA elementary schools in a northern California school district concluded that AA principals lead differently, and he speculated a link between AA principals and AA student achievement. His exploratory study consisted of principal observations and interviews, teacher interviews, and questionnaires where he found cultural connections between the AA principal and their students in regard to discipline and cultural views that were valued by their teachers (Lomotey, 1987). Lomotey's (1987) research study identified the three C's of AA leadership: (1) a strong commitment to the education of AA children, (2) a deep compassion and understanding of their students and of the communities in which they work, and (3) a sincere confidence in the ability of all AA children to learn. Lomotey (1989), attributes these leadership characteristics to the cultural similarities which helped principals better understand their AA students and their communities. His research suggests that the principals' belief in the students indirectly impacts student achievement by setting high expectations (Lomotey, 1989).

Similarly Brown and Beckett (2007) state that AA principals understand the hardships of AA students their families and their communities, especially AA students in poverty. Kunjufu (2012) asserts principals must spend most of their time out of their office to evaluate teachers effectively because AA male students need instruction focused on these best practices: expectations, time on task, and classroom management skills.

Cyclical Problem

Roberts (2009) called for more research to further examine the experience and leadership of AA male principals, but he noted challenges due to the lack of AA male principals in those position, which is reiterated in Tillman's writing (2004, 2008). The shortage of AA principals has a direct relationship to the lack of AA male teachers. Studies have discussed the AA male teacher shortage from a historical and racial context (Lynn 2006, Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Data indicates AA male teachers are a rarity; of the nation's three million teachers approximately 1.8% of them are AA males while the AA male student population is 7.39% (Hawkins, 2015). According to Toldson and Lewis (2012) the difference in the AA student population and the AA male teaching force is a huge disparity. It is described as a cyclical problem: If boys do not have male teachers, they are less likely to enter the teaching profession (Chmelynski, 2006). Additionally, the NEA reports (as cited in Chmelynski, 2006), that males tend to gravitate toward the secondary schools because of the desire to teach the subject instead of nurturing the children, creating a paucity of male teachers at the elementary level. The underperforming of AA boys has led to a recursive problem that ends with low high school graduation rates and boys ill prepared for college. The cycle of poor performance creates a shortage of AA male teachers and principals, particularly at the elementary level.

AA male teachers' commitment to AA boys. Brown's (2009) study in the Midwest examined the interaction between AA male students and teachers from the teachers' conceptualization of AA males' social and educational needs. The study included nine AA male teachers with at least five years of experience who worked at a Title I school with an embedded focus on improving the academic success of AA male students (Brown, 2009). For two weeks the researcher observed the AA teachers in one-on-one, small, and large group interactions with AA male students in a variety of settings. Based on the observations, the researcher found three styles of performance that teachers used when

interacting with the AA students: enforcer, negotiator, and playful. According to Brown (2009) the teacher's performance was influenced by their "shared commitment to radically change the social and education conditions for African American males, they each held quite diverse perspectives about African American male social and educational needs" (p. 425). The study found that the AA male teachers instructed in a way to improve the educational and social conditions of the AA male students through a commitment to reaching AA males by recognizing the political context in which AA males reside. Brown (2009) asserts that AA male teachers are more than merely "role models" these teachers utilize diverse approaches to meet the needs of AA male students. The implications of this study call for further research on the complex relationship between AA male students and teachers:

Indeed, as expressed by teachers throughout the study, the interactions between African American male teacher and African American male students was as messy and multifaceted as any relationship...Rather, what I wish to point out is that African American male teacher in this study had to work through uncertainties and employ a variety of beliefs, practices, and pedagogies to address the needs of African American male students. And of course, embedded within these practices, beliefs, and pedagogies was in-depth understanding of what it means to be "Black" and "male." And yet, even here, both how the teachers approached Black male students and envisioned the model for what these students should and could become was quite different. Thus, by carefully examining the complexities of African American male teacher performance within urban education settings, policy-makers, practitioners and researchers can move beyond the flat and simplistic narratives that too often consume educational discourse. (Brown, 2009, p. 433)

Brown (2009) asserts that studying AA male teachers can inform the literature and improve instructional practices for AA male students.

Brown (2009) suggests that AA male teachers are not merely role models, but proposes that an in depth look at the pedagogy of AA male teachers could enlighten the struggles of AA male students educational experiences, and could benefit future educational policies and procedures that limit their success. These pedagogical practices and knowledge can enhance AA teachers who become principals.

A Lynn and Jennings' (2009) study affirms the importance of AA male teachers. The study examined teachers' perspective on identity, roles, pedagogy, and education reform. The teachers chosen in the study were in predominantly AA schools in an AA community in South Central Los Angeles. More than 75% of their students were AA and 65% or more of the teachers were AA. The teachers were chosen for the study based on the following criteria: full-time teaching status, culturally relevant teaching methods, commitment to the community, and diversity of subject matter and grade levels. Lynn and Jennings (2009) describe the benefits of AA male's pedagogical practices: "Through their pedagogies of affirmation, both men provided safe spaces for African American male students in their classrooms. These students felt safe to voice their concerns, express their desires, and contemplate the larger questions of life" (p. 191). This study demonstrates the need for AA males teachers due to their ability to give AA boys a voice in the educational setting. Research consistently indicates the positive impact of AA educators on the academic achievement of AA students (Brown, 2005 ; Howard, 2012; Kafele, 2012; Lomotey, 1987). By extension, the lack of AA teachers leaves not only a void at the classroom level but also leaves a dearth of potential AA principals.

Importance of Recruitment and Retention of AA teachers

According to Fullan, developing others is essential to the role of the principal (2010). Building future leaders is a natural integration in the work of the school and is a powerful tool for solving

problems collectively and making continuous progress (Fullan, 2010). This development ensures a pipeline of leaders who are “constantly cultivating kindred spirits and future leaders who can go further” (Fullan, 2010, p. 14).

The aftermath of the Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) ruling left a void in the number of Black educators since nearly 40,000 were fired or demoted (Madkins, 2011). Before the ruling, 50% of Black professionals in the US were teachers and some graduated from a Historically Black College and Universities (HBCU) (Madkins, 2011). According to Madkins (2011), the current lack of AA male teachers is due to them being attracted to other more lucrative fields with higher prestige (p. 420). Before segregation, Black teachers solely taught Black students, and teachers were highly respected and accessible for Black people as a career choice (Madkins, 2011). At HBCUs Black teacher candidates were instilled with the belief that the mission of teaching was improving the race as a whole (Morris, 2004). The teachers were role models for students, helping them gain social mobility while they entered a world of racial discrimination and inequity (Siddle-Walker, 1996, 2000, 2003).

A growing body of literature suggests that teachers of color are well suited to facilitate learning for students of color (Leonard & Evans, 2013; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). After examining 11 studies on teacher of color and their effects on students of color, Villegas and Davis (2008) suggest that teachers of color have more favorable views of students of color in regard to their academic potential, leading to better outcomes than their white counterparts. Culturally relevant teaching is attributed to favorable outcomes when teachers and students share culture and race (Kunjufu, 2013; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Of the 11 studies reviewed, seven studies (Dee, 2004; 2005; Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1995; Figlio, 2005; Hanushek, 1992; Klopfenstein, 2005; Oates, 2003; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002) specifically applied to AA students and AA teachers, and revealed the importance of AA teachers for retention and recruitment purposes.

Individual studies also support the success of AA students when paired with AA teachers. Before the analysis of the Tennessee Project Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) class-size experiment, there was little evidence to suggest any correlation between achievement and same race of teacher and student (Dee, 2001). Dee (2004) reanalyzed scores from the Tennessee Project STAR class size experiment that was conducted in the late 1980s. The study examined the test score data from the Tennessee Project STAR through randomization, which matched students and teachers from the participating 79 schools including students up to 3rd grade (Dee, 2001). Dee's (2004) findings suggests that racial pairings of teachers and students for one-year significantly increased AA students' reading and math achievement scores by three to four percent points. According to Dee (2001) recruitment is a valuable resource for improving student achievement:

There are rather large educational benefits for both Black and white students from assignment to an own-race teacher in these early grades. These results clearly provide novel support for the conventional assumption that recruiting minority teachers can generate important achievement gains among minority students. These results also suggest that one of the real and typically overlooked costs of such efforts may be a meaningful reduction in the education achievement of non-minority students. (p. 25)

The race pairings effects of the study were stronger toward poor AA students in racially segregated schools (Villegas & Irvine, 2010, p. 179). Likewise, Hanushek (1992) and Evans (1992) found that AA students taught by AA teachers showed higher gains than their white counterparts on standardized tests specifically in vocabulary in reading (Hanushek, 1992). Evans' study (1992) showed gains in economic literacy by AA students taught by AA teachers. Only one study reviewed indicated that racial pairing found no significant impact for students of color (Ehrenberg et al., 1995). This study reviewed test

scores for reading comprehension, science, history/social studies, and mathematics between 8th and 10th grade.

Several studies that examined increasing the number of Black teachers at a school showed academic gains (Dee, 2004, 2005; Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1995; Figlio, 2005; Hanushek, 1992; Klopfenstein, 2005; Oates, 2003; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). Ehrenberg and Brewer (1995) found that increasing the number of Black teachers within a school without racial pairings of students to teachers showed score gains for Black high school students. Similarly, Pitts (2007) reported that students of color had significantly higher passing rates for high school graduation exams in school districts with a diverse teaching population that mirrored the diverse student population. Also, success was found when looking at particular courses and the number of AA teachers. Klopfenstein (2005) found after AA students completed a geometry course, enrollment of AA students in Algebra II increased significantly as the percentage of AA math teachers increased at the school. Beyond academics, Farkas et al. (1990) found that AA students taught by AA teachers had lower rates of absenteeism.

According to Lee, Lomotey, and Shujaa (1990) AA teaching perspective is essential to producing an education that embodies “pride, equity, power, wealth and cultural continuity” (p.47) that will extend into the African American community and culture by advancing character development. AA teachers are able to communicate with students about the importance of education in regard to personal value, collective power, and political consequences (Foster, 1990). Foster (1990) suggests that AA teachers empower their AA students, encourage active involvement in their education, and refuse to blame their families or the community for student underachievement. Beyond the classroom, AA teachers serve as role models to their students and are believed to boost their self-worth (Cole, 1986; King, 1993; Waters, 1989). Despite the benefits of AA teachers evidenced by the research, there continues to be lack of AA teachers in the workforce.

According to Tillman (2008), most students of color are taught by white females who have little to no training or experiences with students of diverse backgrounds. There is a direct relationship between the lower number of AA male teachers and principals. According to Toldson and Lewis (2012), there are 7,603 AA males that complete education programs nationwide but only 23% of those AA males, 1,748, actually enter the teaching force, which indicates a need to improve not only the entrance into education programs but recruitment by school districts. Without AA male teachers there is essentially no potential for growth in the area of AA male principals despite the benefits mentioned by several researchers (Brown, 2009; Kafele, 2012; Lomotey, 1987). A key to solving this problem is to determine AA males' pathway to college and universities.

Myths about AA Males in Higher Education

According to Toldson (2014), AA males and females attend HBCUs at about the same ratio approximately, two females to every male, and for single gender schools such as, Moorehouse, there as many males as the female population combined of Spelman and Bennett College (p. 12). Toldson (2014) asserts that "black males are more adequately represented in higher education than white males" when compared to the overall population of black males in the U.S. in college (p.12):

The 12.7 million Black males who are 18 years or older comprise 5.5 percent of the adult population in the U.S. and the 76.4 million White males comprise 32.7 percent.

According to the 2010 census, the 1.2 million Black male college students comprise 5.5 percent of all college students, while the 5.6 million White male student comprise 27 percent. (p. 12)

Toldson (2014) attributes the lack of males attending HBCUs to the increasing amounts of Black males attending community colleges and distance learning programs. He believes that poor advisement and a lack of academic rigor leads African Americans down the path of two-year colleges (2014). According

to Toldson (2014), just 12 percent of AA students are taking pre-calculus or calculus by the 11th grade in compared to 24 percent of their White peers (p. 14). Therefore AAs are not academically prepared for the selective admission processes of HBCUs (Toldson, 2014). Toldson and Johns (2016) dispel myths about the number of AA males in college in comparison to the number of AA males in prison because the misuses of data about Black men are potential barriers to their college and career advancement. This research study explores AA principals' leadership experience which includes their pathway to this position and ways to further the education of AA boys who could serve as future principals.

Exemplary Programs

Due to the AA teacher shortage many universities and communities are taking a stand (Chmelynski, 2006; 100 Black Men of America, Inc., 2015; The Academy @ Shawnee, 2015; Zell, 2011). These programs seek to increase the number of AA males teaching in classrooms by offering support systems with the goal of increasing AA role models through teaching programs and community outreach.

University programs. Call Me MISTER (Men Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) was organized in 1999 at Clemson University and other historically Black colleges and universities (Chmelynski, 2006). The program's goal is to not only provide role models for Black boys but to dispel stereotypes of the Black male population; the field coordinator of the program explained, "As a Black male and former elementary teacher here in South Carolina, I know the value of having a Black male in the classroom that can counter people's stereotypes of the Black male population" (Chmelynski, 2006, p. 42). By recruiting and retaining Black male elementary teachers, Call Me MISTER's goal is to provide all students with Black males in positions of authority who demonstrate responsibility and academic success instead of the stereotypical roles such as athletes, entertainers, or

criminals (Chmelynski, 2006). The goal was to hire 200 Black male teachers for the South Carolina public schools (Chmelynski, 2006). By 2013, Call Me Mister has extended to college campuses in over 17 states (Kunjufu, 2013).

Men equipped to nurture. Maryland also found a need to recruit more male teachers in Prince George's County (Chmelynski, 2006). The school district serves 135,000 students and 77% are AA, of the 8,600 teachers less than a quarter of the teachers are male (Chmelynski, 2006). A partnership emerged between the school district and Bowie State University that resulted in the Men Equipped to Nurture (MEN), a teacher program designed to help certify male teachers in urban settings (Chmelynski, 2006). The need for AA teachers who can eventually become principals is an apparent problem being addressed by these urban school districts.

Community organizations. Other community organizations have recognized the importance of AA male role models for AA boys. The 100 Black Men of America, for example, is an organization that mentor children based on meeting their social, emotional, and cultural needs (www.100Blackmen.org). One chapter specifically has an intentional focus of AA boys. The 100 Black Men of Greater Cleveland mentors AA male boys in grades 4th-12th in a program called 100 Black Men of Tomorrow (www.100Blackmen.org). The one-on-one mentoring program's focus is to improve and develop the boys's sense of self, educational attainment, cultural enrichment, personal conduct and positive thinking (www.100Blackmen.org). The AA boys attend sessions twice a month where they receive mentoring and tutoring from AA males and participate in community service projects and field trips. The AA male mentors share personal experiences with the boys through life skills projects and attend field trips and athletic events with the boys (www.100Blackmen.org).

A similar philosophy of empowering AA males is important component of the Men of Quality program sponsored by a historically Black male fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity

(<http://menofquality.org/>). By partnering with a local urban school district in the Southeast region of the United States, the program has grown to serve nearly 3,000 students all over the city since 1995 (<http://menofquality.org/>). The program goals are that the boys learn leadership skills, achieve academically, believe in themselves, and are prepared for their future (<http://menofquality.org/>). The boys must wear a shirt and tie to meetings, abide by zero tolerance policy for drugs, maintain a high academic standing, and exhibit minimal behavior concerns in school as part of the program requirement (<http://menofquality.org/>). This program empowers young males by pairing them with positive male role models who attend activities with them and teach them life lessons.

Effective AA male charter schools. Urban Prep Charter Academy in Chicago, Illinois, a successful charter school for AA males, believes that the AA male role models make a difference (Robinson-English, 2006). According to the principal Dion Steele, a Social Studies teacher at Urban Prep, “They need to see other Black men who are not rappers or ball players. They need to see that they have options” (Robinson-English, 2006, p. 54). Administrators of AA boys academies in urban settings find their schools to be a safe haven because the school offers fewer distractions, more structure, and more AA male role models for their students (Robinson-English, 2006).

The Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Academy is a well known charter schools with 200 schools and 80,000 students enrolled (<http://www.kipp.org/>). According to Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, Pathak, and Walters (2010), KIPP schools target minority and low income students and provide a no excuses approach to teaching and learning. The mission of the academy begins with the “belief that if we help children develop the academic and character strengths they need for college and choice filled lives, they will be able to build a better tomorrow for themselves, for their communities, for us all” (<http://www.kipp.org/>). KIPP academy provides students with a safe learning environment through a restorative practice approach and longer calendar year with extended days. Students spent

eight hours in school each day instead of the traditional six hour day, and four hours on Saturdays (Kunjufu, 2013). The teachers at KIPP are involved in on going training and set high expectations for students. KIPP academy provides on the job training to teachers to prepare them for leader opportunities with in KIPP schools. According to Angrist et al. (2010), a study of KIPP schools in Massachusetts found noteworthy student achievement gains on state wide standardized tests (p. 243). These academies' philosophies are aligned with the moral imperative of AA principals pre and post *Brown v. Board of Education*, framing educators as role models and servant leaders.

Theoretical Framework

This section examines the social constructs that relate to this study in regard to race and gender of principal leaders. Three theoretical frameworks worked together to inform the study: Critical Race Theory, Homophily, and Symbolic Interactionism Theory. Each of these perspectives is relevant due to interactions of race and gender and their impact on AA principals and the AA students they serve.

Critical Race Theory

Many researchers cite Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a foundation for their work (e.g. Lynn & Jennings, 2009). The seminal researchers of CRT are Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995). Gloria Ladson Billings (1998) a seminal researcher in CRT asserts that CRT can be a powerful tool for the sustained inequity of people of color through story telling. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) extended the platform for Critical Race Theory. According to Lynn and Parker (2006) CRT is an analytical framework about race and racism in the law and society and helps answer the question "Why does racism exist?" (p. 258). Specifically in education, CRT has become a lens by which to examine the impact of race on K-12 education (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Critical race theorists assert that legal action and civil rights laws have weakened overt racism, but another form of covert racism has emerged (Lynn

& Parker, 2006). One of the critical beliefs of CRT is that overt racism has decreased although everyday racism has increased (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

CRT allows researchers to explore the perspectives of AA principals and make assertions about the impact of Brown vs. Board on current educational practices, hiring of AA educators, and achievement of AA students.

The sixth tenet is the focal point of this research. CRT's goal of ending racial oppression prompted this study's examination of the perspective of AA principals, which could help improve the state of AA males in education and inform the current literature. Lynn's (2002) study found, through a critical analysis of teachers, that Black teachers can be categorized into three trends. The first two trends relate to their social responsibility and the political context of working in urban schools. The third trend is most applicable to this work as it emphasized the role of AA teachers in the lives of AA students (Lynn, 2002):

In sharp contrast to the other two traditions, a third tradition of research on teaching focuses almost exclusively on the ways in which Black teachers have struggled throughout history to act as advocates for Black Students in urban schools. Not only does this literature illuminate their political activism, but is also sheds light on the ways in which their culturally grounded teaching practices have positively influenced Black students in difficult circumstances. Central to this body of scholarship is an explanation and interrogation of the social context in which Black teachers work and live. (p. 121)

History shows the positive impact of AA teachers (e.g. Anna Julia Cooper, Mary MacLeod Bethune, Carter G. Woodson, and Horace Mann Bond) on the lives of AA students be engaging in social activism regarding the particulars of education AA students (Fultz, 1995a,1995b; Johnson, 2000). Thus

teaching in the Black community is more than a profession; Black teachers are viewed as change agents (Lynn , 2002).

Current research recognizes the influence of CRT on Black teachers in their practice (Foster 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lynn & Jennings, 2004; 2009). According to Lynn and Jennings (2004), critical theorists have overlooked how Black teachers have prepared Black children to be culturally competent social critics and highly literate. Critical pedagogy of AA teachers is a unique impact that must be further explored and theorized (Lynn & Jennings, 2009). CRT plays a significant role in examining the experiences of AA male principals through race and gender pre and post Brown v. Board of Education.

CRT researchers have examined the methodological and theological significance of CRT and its linkage to education (Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Critical pedagogy is a method to meet the needs of minority students by transforming the classroom to address racial inequalities through informative practice (Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Lynn and Jennings' study (2009) focused on the following question "What is unique about the pedagogy of African American teachers, especially as related to African American students?" by analyzing and interpreting narrative data. The study focused on the AA male teachers through critical race theory lens to dispel inaccuracies about Black educators (Lynn & Jennings, 2009). This research will further explore race and gender in an elementary setting and, examine the unique relationship between AA male principals and their students through cultural intersections and resources.

According to Lynn and Jennings (2009), AA male teachers have a pedagogical sensitivity for AA students who live in low socio-economic status communities and have witnessed traumatic situations. This sensitivity aids in their ability to meet the specific needs of AA students when they misbehave, which could be perceived by other teachers as a threat to authority (Lynn & Jennings,

2009). Naturally, these teacher qualities will be assets to them in future leadership positions, such as the principalship, when extended to disciplinary actions and academic concerns of AA students. Urban principals need aspects of instructional and transformational leadership to meet their needs of their students (Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2014). The compassion and commitment of AA teachers to AA children is an aspect of critical race pedagogy founded in critical race theory:

A critical race pedagogy challenges the traditional claims that the educational system and its institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Critical race educators argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in US society. (Solorzano & Yosso, 2005)

The teachers presented in the Lynn and Jennings study (2009) in Los Angeles represent the characteristics of critical race educators. The AA male teachers in the study practice two types of critical race practices: a pedagogies of dissent and affirmation. Similarly a study of AA teachers in urban school districts in Louisiana found that AA men became teachers for three main reasons: for helping young people, employment, and contributing to humanity (Lewis, 2006). Job security was reported as the most significant factor affecting retention. According to Lewis (2006), job security could be maximized by allowing AA males the opportunity to seek administrative positions paired with mentoring internships to support administrative retention. Opportunities for career advancement will make AA male educators more marketable and increase school district's ability to retain AA males who leave for more lucrative jobs (Lewis, 2006). Since most states require teacher certification before obtaining a principal certification (Roberts, 2009), the work of quality teachers is an essential prerequisite to becoming a principal.

Based on the research, the role of AA male teacher is more than one-dimensional, simply serving as role models, they also have a distinctive type of teaching practice (Brown, 2009, 2012). Brown (2012) suggests that AA male teachers were employed as “big bodies” (p. 312) to simply discipline AA male students without regard to their “pedagogical potential” (p. 312). Without examining the complexities of the AA male experiences, schools and school districts will be unable to meet the needs of AA male students and discover what AA male teachers can offer instructionally (Brown, 2012). The research shows a unique relationship between AA male students and educators (Brown, 2009; Kafele, 2010; Lomotey, 1987). Tillman (2004) suggests that AA’s agenda “must include increasing the number of African American teachers, principals, and superintendents who interact with, nurture, guide and protect African American children” (p. 301). This study seeks to uncover the AA male principal’s perspective on their role in the lives of AA boys and identify any commonalities in their leadership practice.

Gender and Race Implications in the School Setting

According to *USA Today* (2009), school districts and teacher preparation programs must work to increase the number of male teachers to effectively promote social and gender equality. The NEA (cited in *USA Today*, 2009) reports that only one-quarter of the public school teachers are male. Schools are institutions that should mirror society and reproduce our cultural and societal values and norms, but instead continue to demonstrate sexist gender relations (*USA Today*, 2009). According to Pollard (1997), research on gender and race has been addressed separately when they are both apart of one’s identity, and that identity is influenced by the interaction of both statuses. Unlike the days of segregation, principals are dealing with managing students and teachers from totally different backgrounds (Pollard, 1997). The demographic of schools has become more important especially in urban schools where the majority of students are of color but the majority of staff being white

(Berchini; 2015; Deruy, 2013; Goldberg, 2014; Pollard, 1997). A study conducted on elementary AA male and female principals in a large urban district showed both groups felt their race and gender were vital parts of their mission as educational leaders (Pollard, 1997). Research suggests that male educators tend to work in older grades due to suspicious perceptions of men working with younger children, and messages sent by the media that portray men teaching elementary age students negatively (Mistry & Sood, 2012). Male teachers who work with younger student are stereotyped as ‘homosexuals, pedophiles or principals in training’ (King, 1998). According to Mistry and Sood (2012) the discourse surrounding the lack of males in primary schools focuses on the significant need without an equal focus on the benefits. Conflicting views of gender and its benefits in education continue to arise. Some research suggest that have boys from impoverished areas are taught more effectively by male teachers because these teachers act as role models for the boys. (Birmingham Post, 2008; Holland, 1996; Mensah-Assibey, 1997; Tifft & Henderson, 1990)

A relevant study (Howard, 2012) affirms the male role model theory: Eight AA boys were interviewed about their relationships with male school personnel of different races. Data analysis suggested a unique relationship between AA male students and AA male staff members that differs with staff members of other races (Howard, 2012). The distinctive interaction is described by Howard:

The relationships are unique in that the congruence of race and gender provides the opportunity for adolescent African American boys to expand the possibilities for self as they negotiate the process of establishing an identity that feels most authentic and true to self. These relationships are further unique in that adult African American males are able to sometimes help them understand what it means to be both African-American and male in society. (p. 385)

According to Howard (2012), AA boys find connections with AA educators due to gender and race similarities. The teachers' sense of caring for the students and high expectations could result in positive student development and increased engagement. Also, research suggests that positive student-teacher relationships could have a positive impact on their academic engagement (Murray, 2009; Murray & Malmgren, 2005). The navigation of self both through a gender and race lens could extend beyond the classroom to negotiate as males and AAs in society (Howard 2012). AA male role models are a part of the solution to help AA boys as they face challenges by adjusting their pedagogy to support their development (Brown, 2009).

Characteristics of AA principals

Principal leadership is an essential component of student success, especially African American students (Lomotey, 1993). Several studies have suggested that AA principals have built upon the history of segregated schools for AA students with AA teachers through effective communication with the students and families they served (Lomotey 1987, 1989, 1993; Mc Gee Banks, 2001; Pollard & Ajirotutu, 2000, Sanders & Harvey, 2002). The contemporary research on AA principals begins with Kofi Lomotey's qualitative research on three AA principals in predominantly AA elementary schools (Lomotey 1987, 1989, 1990).

Lomotey's (1987) research suggests that there are three essential qualities of an AA principal in predominantly AA schools: *commitment* to the education of AA students, *confidence* in the ability of AA students to do well, and *compassion* for all students and their communities where they reside (Lomotey, 1989). AA principals as minorities have had unique experiences that may help them deal with students from diverse backgrounds. Lomotey (1987) suggests that AA principals want all students to perform at high levels and are naturally concerned with the communities in which the student reside.

Homophily

Lomotey (1987) asserts that AA principal view the world differently and have a thought process crafted by unique cultural characteristics. Lomotey (1987) explains this phenomena in regard to similar characteristics defined as homophily:

When two Blacks interact or communicate, their shared beliefs and values suggest that homophily occurs bringing about greater information usage, attitude information, attitude change, and behavior change. For example, homophily occurs in the communication and interaction between a Black principal and (Murnane, 1975) Black students, as a result of their likenesses. This may be a desirable situation because this homophily may make interaction and exchange of thoughts and messages more effective achievement. (p. 175)

For example, an AA principal may rely on their experience as an AA when disciplining a student because their cultural circumstances are different than other cultures in America (Lomotey, 1987). Encouraging parental involvement in decision making and active roles in school activities is a distinctive component of AA principal leadership (Lomotey, 1987). Since parents are aware of the school's purpose, they are able to play a vital role in the education of their student, which promotes academic achievement of AA students. Not only do the parents effectively promote their children's education, the teachers and principals communicate with the AA student in a beneficial away.

According to Tillman (2004), AA principals once played a significant role in the AA community and in segregated schools where they ensured relevant curriculum and promoted fundraising to help AA children. According to Louis and Wahlstrom (2011), principals' ability to incite change is based on their ability to involve the school community and reshape the cultural through improving student learning. Building on Lomotey's (1987, 1989, 1990) work, this study will recount beliefs, experiences,

and cultural implications of AA male principals influence on the Black communities and AA male students they serve.

Sociologist began studying the phenomenon known as homophily in the 1950s (Retica, 2006). It began with the early research on group formation and networking in the 1920s (e.g. Hubbard, 1929; Wellman, 1929) that suggested school children formed friendships and play groups at higher rates based on similar demographic characteristics (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). According to McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook (2001), homophily is defined as “the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people” (p. 416). Similarities are a bond which results in homogeneity in people’s personal networks (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001).

Although most of the research on homophily in K-12 relates to friendships, over the past 10 years researchers have paid more attention to communication between students and instructors (Myers & Huebner, 2011). A Myers and Huebner (2011) study investigating motives for communication between college students and instructors defined student-teacher communication as “instructor homophily” (p. 84): “Instructor homophily refers to the extent to which students consider their instructors to share similar attitudes...” (Myers & Huebner, 2011, p. 85). Two types of homophily derived from Lazarsfeld and Merton’s (1954) research: status homophily and value homophily. Status homophily is based on formal or informal status whereas value homophily is based on values, attitudes and beliefs. Status homophily is associated with race, ethnicity, sex, age, or other acquired characteristics such as religion (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Based on the research from Kofi Lomotey (1987), instructor, value, and status homophily are relative to education because of the mutual value system and cultural connectedness associated with AA students and teachers described in his research.

For example, AA principals communicate and interact with AA students effectively due to their similarities (Lomotey, 1987, 1989), and shared beliefs system that allows for improved information usage, attitude formation, attitude change, and behavior change. This beneficial exchange of thoughts and messages of the AA principal and student affects academic achievement (Lomotey, 1987).

Homophily describes the kinship and understanding of the student by the principal that a principal of another race may not be privy to. Lomotey has termed the three qualities: commitment, confidence, and community as the “ethno-humanist role identity” (1993). This term suggests that AA principals are more concerned with students’ holistic progress than simple academic success from grade to grade; they focus on the student’s overall livelihood and the improvement of AAs as a group. The ethno-humanist role identity is grounded on the symbolic interactionist literature that describes the relationships between human beings as they form roles through social interaction. This particular study focuses on AA male principals’ perceptions and their interaction with AA male students and the stakeholders.

Symbolic Interactionism Theory

The social interaction between AA male principals and AA students is an integral part of the study. Blumer (1969), the founder of symbolic interactionism, states “symbolic interactions sees meanings as social products, creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (p. 5). Lomotey (1989) suggested a unique interaction between AA principals and AA students that involves effective communication and a sense of cultural similarities. This relationship must be examined to determine how the actors influence one another in a school setting. According to Charon (2010), social symbolic interaction is a critical component of who people are that is demonstrated through social action. Social interaction is defined as an interaction between two or more actors where the actors adjust based on the acts of each other and one’s self (Charon, 2010, p. 136). As

actors interact over a period of time for example a marriage, friendship, or in communities such as school, actors are influenced by the constant interaction which gradually changes their stream of action, perspectives, views, and interests (Charon, 2010, p. 136). Symbolic Interactionism that could potentially describe and examine the effective communication between AA principals and students. The lack of AA males in education and the underachievement of AA male students has been discussed in the research as a continuous problem worthy of investigation (Brown, 2009; Haycock, 2001; Howard, 2013; Lomotey, 1987). Symbolic interactionism suggest how race identities are formed. Charon (2010) writes:

People who interact with one another form society. They take one another into account; they communication, role take, and cooperate. They share understanding of reality, and they develop a set of rules to live by. At the same time, the development of society through cooperative symbolic interaction will, by its very nature, cut off interaction with those outside that interaction. This is the basis for the racial problems in this society, and it is the basis for similar problems in all societies. (p. 201)

Symbolic interactionism suggests when actors are segregated the non-dominant actors will be viewed as different even when there is no true difference; the dominant society will view their own culture as right and it is illogical to expect them to see other cultures equally (Charon, 2010, p. 202). Segregation in U.S. schools has had a lasting effect on present day trends in education and the achievement gap continues to grow for AA male students (Haycock, 2001; Schott Foundation, 2016). Based on symbolic interactionism, this achievement gap is to be expected due to the dominant society perceiving those how are different as less than implying that their performance derives from laziness and an unwillingness to take advantage of the ‘American Dream’ (Charon, 2010). Symbolic interactionism is an avenue to explore questions that people often ignore and to identify societal issues that have become

social problems. Charon (2010) describes symbolic interactionism as a means of “helping us understand social problems in this society and in the world” (p. 201). This framework served as a lens to inform data collection and analyze the unique social interactions that take place when AA male principals lead elementary schools.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Brothers, brothers gonna work it out
 Work it out, brothers gonna work it out
 Brothers, brothers gonna work it out
 Work it out, brothers gonna work it out

You got it, what it takes
 Come get it, where you want it?
 Go get it, get involved
 'Cause the brothers in the street are willing to work it out

So many of us in limbo, how to get it on, it is quite simple
 3 stones from the sun, we need a piece of this rock
 Our goal indestructible soul, answers to this quizzin'
 To the brothers in the street, schools and the prisons

-Public Enemy (1998)

An apparent lack of AA teachers and principals and the decline in AA male achievement are important topics that have led to seeking to understand the role of AA male elementary principals and contribute their perspective to the extant research on elementary school leadership. Several studies have called for the silent voices of AA educators to be heard (Brown L. & Beckett, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Howard, 2013; Kafele, 2010; Noguera, 2008). In this study, the AA principals, through story-telling, provide a vivid account of their perspective on education as an AA, male, and an elementary level leader. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a means to explore a group with a problem that has been silenced. This research will explore the lived experience of African American male principals post Brown v. Board of Education (1954), and how they perceive their leadership experience working in an urban elementary school setting by exploring their commitment to Black children, specifically Black males.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

According to Creswell (2013) qualitative research uses theoretical frameworks to inform research that addresses social or human problems. In this study, the problem is the lack of AA principals and the limited amount of research to understand AA male principals' experience, their leadership, and communication styles. In this research study, I examined the problem through interviews, collection of artifacts, and in-school and out-of-school observations in the participants' professional settings. As the researcher, as I was able to talk directly to the AA male principals and discuss race and gender issues they face post Brown vs. Board of Education ruling. I also examined race and gender's effect on their leadership practice, and their potential influence on AA male students. The research questions mentioned below allowed AA male elementary principals to tell their story through interactions and personal experiences. Yin (2003) asserts that an important part of case study research is its ability to "explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies" (p. 15). This research required qualitative methods because the historical, political, and racial implications of the study cannot be adequately illustrated through numbers or statistical analysis; the voice of the participants is a vital component. The study examined the following research questions:

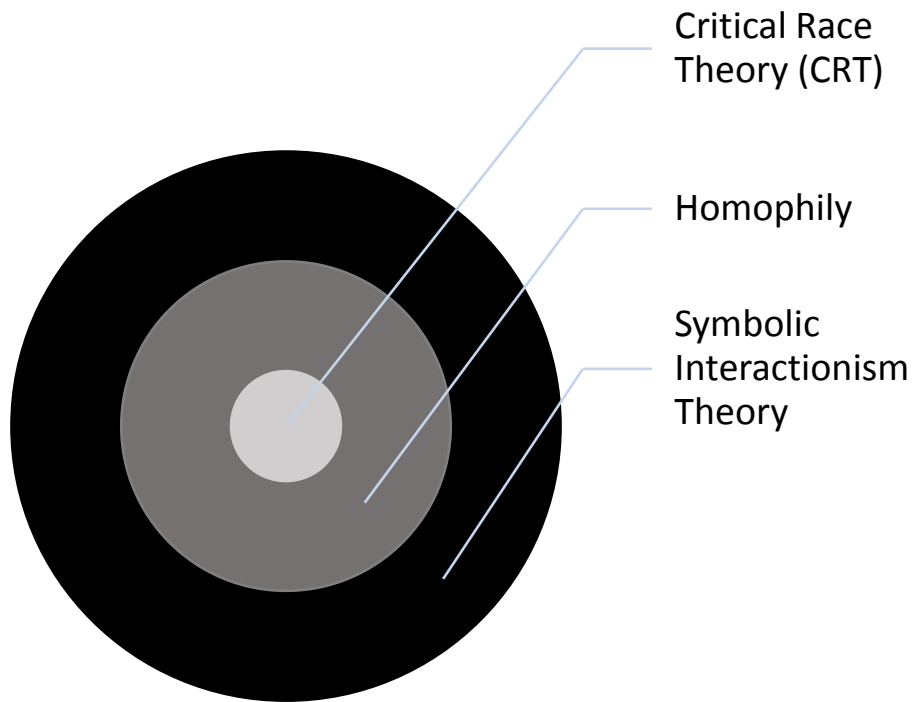
1. What are the experiences of five AA male elementary principals in a large urban district located in the Southeastern United States post Brown vs. Board of Education?
2. What are the leadership styles and characteristics of these AA male principals?
3. How do these AA male principals understand their ability to interact using cultural resources and cultural intersections with AA male students and their families?

Each questions is raised to further understand the role of AA male principal and their influence on AA male students through their leadership, communication, expectations, and cultural intersections.

Theoretical Lens

Critical Race Theory (CRT), homophily, and symbolic interactionism are all frameworks that informed this study. CRT is the core of the theoretical framework due to the historical, racial, and political context of the participants. CRT was use to review the literature, to form questions and to analyze data. Homophily was used to further understand the cultural relationship between AA elementary male principals and AA male students in an education setting, is reflected by research questions two and three, and is another lens for data analysis. Symbolic interactionism embodies the school context, helped the researcher understand the dynamics of social actors in a setting, and examined the distinctive interactions of human beings. Figure 1 is a visual illustration of the interconnectedness of these theories. These theories are discussed from the core outward to reflect their influence on the study. All three theoretical framework are used to seek a better understanding of the relationship between AA male principals and AA male students in an urban elementary setting by examining social injustices, like-mindedness through cultural similarities, and the social connectedness of the actors in the current public education system.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



Critical race theory (CRT). According to Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993), there are six themes that define the CRT foundation. All six tenets are used as a means to analyze the data through story-telling and the critiquing of school practices through the eyes of AA male principals:

1. CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. CRT expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claim of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
3. CRT challenges a historicism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law...Critical race theorists...adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestation of group advantage and disadvantage.
4. CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. CRT is interdisciplinary.
6. CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

Each of these tenets is a core component of this study. Tenet one relates to the marginalization of AA males in K-12 education evidenced by the achievement gap, in the sparse number of minorities in education, and the underperformance of AA males nationally. According to Decuir and Dixson (2004), racism is a part of American life and exists in education although it may be subtle or salient. Tenet two represents the meritocracy and colorblindness that currently exists in public education that is evidenced by microaggressions (Allen, Scott, & Lewis, 2013) and low percentages of AA students in gifted and talented programs. Tenet two is a means of critiquing the current policies that limit the success of AA children such as zero tolerance policies and overrepresentation in special education courses. Tenet three is evident in the number of minorities that were fired by the thousands (Madkins, 2011); after the Brown vs. Board ruling that still has had lasting effects on the number of minorities in education with merely 1% of AAs in the teaching force (Lewis, 2006; NCES, 2010). Teachers and principals were pillars of the community and were seen as community leaders prior to the Brown vs. Board ruling and the elimination of their positions halted “engendered action for the education community” (Karpinski,

2006, p. 239). Tenet three reflects the historical, social, and political context of Brown vs. Board and its negative impact on AA principals due to demotion and removal from the educational landscape (Karpinski, 2006). Tenet four is explored through giving the AA male principal a voice that is underrepresented in current literature (Karpinski, 2006; Lomotey, 1987; Tillman, 2004). Tenet five relates to the multifaceted component of CRT that encompasses K-12, the community at large, and its relationship to disproportionality and marginalization of AA males today. Tenet six is the reason behind the research: to eliminate racism and oppression of AA male students in the microcosm of education to further equitable outcomes for all students. These tenets operated as a lens for analyzing the data and helped frame questions that explore the relevant issues of CRT such as racism, oppression, lack of diversity, and social injustice through story telling.

Homophily. The research questions explore the Three C's: compassion, community, and confidence derived from Lomotey's (1987, 1989) research to better understand the relationship between AA male principal and AA male students through their like-mindedness, communication, and expectations. This study seeks to understand the potential the Three C's have on AA male principals as they interact with AA students, particularly AA males. Lomotey asserts that when two Black people communicate their values and beliefs homophily occurs due to their likenesses bringing about attitude and behavior change and even more effective communication (1987). In this study, research question three seeks to understand the communication between AA male principals and AA male students to identify cultural intersections and cultural resources that surface in AA male principal's leadership style. By observing the AA male principals in-school and out-of-school, I was able to observe their leadership style in the school context through their interactions with AA students and their families.

Symbolic interactionism theory. Education is an institution of social human beings. In this particular study, I examined the social interactions of the AA principals with stakeholders in the school

and with a focus on their role interacting with AA males. Charon (2010) states that “role taking too develops out of our interaction it become more and more a part of through our interaction” (p. 140). As the researcher I wanted to explore the role of AA male principals from their perspective and observe it in the field to understand the qualities of their leadership and its potential to impact the community and the students.

Case Study Design

Case study is defined by Yin (2003) “as empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Multi-case, qualitative study was used for this dissertation using five cases. Yin (2003) asserts that the logic behind a multi-case study relies on the thoughtful selection so that similar results or contrasting results are predicted. He also suggest that trustworthy results can be more convincing and takes in-depth review of the multiple cases by the researcher (Yin, 2003). The five cases were selected with Yin’s logic in mind. Each case is bound by their school. Each school is similar by student population comprised of at least 50% AA, 80% free/reduced lunch, and is led by AA male principal. Despite these similarities each has a unique set of challenges, different leadership, teachers, and unique students.

Yin states that using a replication approach allows the researcher to examine each individual case and seek replication in the other cases (2003). This study, through the replication approach, demonstrates the AA male elementary principals overarching similarities or differences in their perception of their leadership experience and style by analyzing their commitment of AA children, specifically AA males. Yin states that having more than just two cases will have a stronger effect and strongly suggest at least two cases rather than a single experiment (2003). This research involved five

cases of AA male principals which will illustrate overlapping and unique ideas of the AA principals in regard to their relationships with AA male students.

Participant and Sampling Approach

Context. The participants were drawn from a county school system in the Southeast region of the United States with 93 elementary schools serving approximately 48,242 students, of whom 8,833 are AA male students, with just nine AA male principals serving at the elementary school level. According to the state Schools and Staffing Survey, 49.8% of principals are male and 50.2% are female at the district level (NCES, 2015). There is a huge disparity between the race of educators and the student population in this state. In 2011-2012 the state had a total of 1,440 principals of which 93.4% of the principals were white, non-Hispanic and 6.4% were African American (NCES, 2015).

Sampling. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants that are male and AA principals in elementary schools. According to Creswell (2013), purposeful sampling allows the researchers to select participants based on their understanding of the research problem and their ability to inform the study. All of the AA male principals in the study work in schools where more than 50% of their student population is AA. In this school district there were only nine AA male principals out of 93 elementary schools. Only five of the principals met the criteria of the study and I sampled every AA male elementary principal with more than 50% AA student population. According to Creswell (2013), case studies should not include more than four or five in a single study; this is enough participants to identify possible themes and make cross-case connections in data analysis. I gained consent through email.

This research seeks to understand AA principals' leadership and its impact on AA male students; therefore I sought schools with high percentages of AA students. The selected principals had the experience necessary to discuss information relevant to AA male students and have informed

discussions about their interactions with AA males, their parents, and the surrounding community. The conversations provided insight on the lived experience of AA male principals, their thoughts about the state of AA male students, and key cultural implications in their practice that directly affect the student achievement of AA males.

Role of the Researcher

Creswell (2013) asserts that the researcher is a key instrument who designs open ended questions and does not tend to rely on instruments designed by other researchers. Yin (2003) asserts that a good case study researcher is a good listener who asks good questions and has a firm grasp of the issues studied through an unbiased approach.

Bias. I am a female AA middle school assistant principal working in the same district as the participants; this provided the participants with a level and comfort when speaking with me about their position due to their familiarity with me and my understanding of their role in this district. We attend the same professional development trainings and district conferences although I attend the secondary sessions and they attend the elementary sessions. I am quite familiar with the culture of African Americans and grew up in the area where the study was conducted. My experience and knowledge is an asset as well as a vulnerability because I have an emotional connection to the AA students, and I believe in the importance of hiring minority administrators to serve them.

My background and experience allowed me to gain access to the principals easily, and they allowed me to visit their schools while they were in session to observe their daily routine. I knew Mr. Wilder through attending the same church since we were children. Mr. Jones, Mr. Muncie and I were in district sponsored leadership programs together. Mr. Riley was a middle school assistant principal before becoming a principal, so we attended the same assistant principal district meetings. Mr. Roberts worked as a teacher at the same elementary as my husband; therefore, we have mutual friends. My

personal bias is I attended schools in the district in which the study was conducted and experienced racism while attending this district. I had to recognize this bias to keep from creating assumptions about interactions that occurred in the schools I observed. I also have a vested personal and professional interest in the future of this district. This interest motivated my work and belief in the power of school leaders. My personal experience in the school district as a student and as a professional gave me extensive knowledge about programs, policies, and potential problems that the school district is facing.

Another potential bias I must acknowledge is the hiring process of this district. As an AA female, I had to go through an extensive hiring process and have experienced the frustrations and difficulties of becoming a leader in this district. I had to recognize this bias to keep from transferring my experience into the participants' experience as I conducted the study. The participants' pathway to leadership may have been quite different than mine, so I did not want to have preconceived notions.

According to Maxwell, "separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks" (2005, p. 38). These biases, due to my cultural affiliation and work experience, allowed me to be aware of potential barriers and to form questions to uncover possible injustices. Essentially, my struggle as an AA student and educator led me to research this topic and explore this topic to help inform the literature in the area of AA educational leadership. Also, as a mother of two AA boys, I felt compelled to research their journey for them and other boys that look like them.

Another influence on my role as the researcher is my job my duties and experiences. As an assistant principal I have spent time analyzing academic and discipline data. These data can be alarming in terms of AA male student's lack of performance academically and high suspension rates. I understand the obstacles that face AA students in our current education system because I observe them

on a daily basis at the middle school level. This study was conducted at the elementary level; this allowed me to examine a different perspective without preconceived notions since I have not worked at this level. As an assistant principal, I am not aware of the principal's role from their everyday perspective and this study offered insight in their leadership style and priorities.

Throughout the study I had to be mindful not to assume that the participants had similar experiences to mine and to simply let them discuss their experiences. I also could not allow myself to overgeneralize findings because I saw an event in one place and assume that it was a common practice. I used intentional systematic data collection, specific interview protocols, and an emergent process that incorporated member checking, triangulation of interviews, artifacts, and observations. I also employed in-process questions as I observed and probing questions in interviews as intentional actions taken to minimize bias and capture honest, rich perspectives in the field. I analyzed the data case by case before looking across cases for commonalities.

Validity. I addressed potential bias by using triangulation and member checking throughout the study. I began by using triangulation from a variety of sources to collect my data: questionnaire, interviews, observations, focus group, and documents. According to Maxwell (2005), triangulation can help eliminate chance associations through using a consistent method. Therefore, it is necessary to triangulate not only the sources of evidence but the method as well to find potential sources of error. I believe the focus group and questionnaire allowed a free flow of ideas and the use of inductive and deductive analysis allowed for a different method of interpretation to produce themes. Also, member checks were conducted at the second interview and the focus group to receive feedback on potential themes and uncover misunderstandings that arose through bias. According to Maxwell (2005), member checking is the single most important way to avoid misinterpreting what participants say and essential to identifying the researcher's biases. By examining rich data from interview transcriptions

and notes in the field and through the combination of member checking and triangulation, I was able to confront bias by questioning and analyzing the data to reach accurate conclusions. Member checking addressed my bias of the school district based on my own experiences as a former student in this district. Triangulation allowed me to look for themes in a variety of sources instead of relying on my assistant principal experience.

Data Collection

Data collection began in March of 2016 and continued until July 2016 and included online questionnaire, interviews, observations, school based documents, and a focus group for a total of 23 hours with at least 6 hours per participant with the exception of one participant. According to Yin (2009) and Creswell (2013), multiple forms of data are imperative sources of information for case studies to provide a rich picture of the case. First participants completed an online questionnaire to establish professional history, vocational calling, and educational experience. Secondly, participants participated in a semi-structured interview that lasted at least an hour. The interview questions addressed background information of participant, AA history, and the role of the principal. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. The first interview was followed up by two observations of the principal conducting normal duties during and after school. The observations were designed to capture the everyday leadership lives of the principals. The in-school observations are a maximum of two hours and the afterschool observation are at least one hour. In-school observations include morning and afternoon duty, hallway monitoring, principal meetings, parent, teacher and/or student conferences. Out-of-school observations include faculty meetings, instructional leadership team meetings, extracurricular activities, and parent nights. Then a second semi-structured interview took place to follow-up the observations. Table 2 highlights the hours spent with each participant.

Table 2

Data Collection by Participant

Mr. Wilder	Mr. Jones	Mr. Muncie	Mr. Riley	Mr. Roberts
Online Questionnaire (15 minutes)	Online Questionnaire (15 minutes)	Online Questionnaire (15 minutes)	Online Questionnaire (15 minutes)	Online Questionnaire (15 minutes)
Semi-structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi-structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi-structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi- structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi- structured Interview (1 hour)
Before school Observation ILT meeting (1 hour)	Afterschool Observation Faculty Meeting (1 hour)	In-school Observation Morning Duty (1 hour)	In-school Observation Hallway Through (1 hour)	Afterschool Observation Family Literacy Night (1.5 hours)
Semi- structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi- structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi- structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi- structured Interview (1 hour)	Semi- structured Interview (1 hour)
Observation Did not participate	Before school and In- school Observation Instructional Leadership Team Meeting and Morning Duty (1.5 hours)	Afterschool observation Instruction Leadership Team Meeting (1 hour)	Afterschool Observation Faculty Meeting (1 hour)	Afterschool Observation Faculty Meeting (1 hour)
Focus Group Did not participate	Semi- structured Interview (2 hours)	Semi-structured Interview (2 hours)	Semi- structured Interview (2 hours)	Semi- structured Interview (2 hours)
Documents: ILT agenda School belief statement	Documents: Faculty Meeting Agenda Broken Ladder Handout School Creed Mission Statement	Documents: School Pledge School Expectations ILT Tracking Sheet	Documents: School Pledge School Expectations	Documents: Student of the Month Bulletin Board Picture Students Attendance Bulletin Board Picture

A focus group interview took place with four of the five participants. One participant could not attend due to a prior scheduled conference. This focus group was designed to identify common and divergent thinking within and between participants. A video recorder was used to videotape interactions of the focus group, which was conducted in a school setting. Documents were collected during observations as well as pertinent school data and included: school creed, mission, vision, and school demographic information. A journal was kept throughout data collection to record descriptive notes.

Interviews. According to Yin (2003), the interview is one of the most important sources of information in a case study because it provides essential evidence. Well-informed respondents give vital information into human affairs, act as relevant sources of information, and provide shortcuts to the prior history related to the situation (Yin, 2003). During the one-on-one interviews I gathered data and member checked the data to prior interviews and observations. Semi-structured interviews were used to provide fluidity in questioning and to probe when more information was necessary. Questions were open-ended the first interviews questions were more general and about the role of the principal. Following the first observation, the second interview focused on Lomotey's 3 Cs: commitment to all children, compassion for student and the community where they reside, and confidence in the ability of AA students (Lomotey, 1987). Two one-on-one interviews were conducted with each participant; and a second interview allowed for member checking to occur. The interview protocol is included in appendix A.

Observations. Creswell (2013) also considers observations as a key tool in data collection. Observations were conducted after each interview. During observations I acted as a nonparticipant observer watching and taking notes from a distance without direct involvement with participants (Creswell, 2013). The observations were at least an hour of a formal and informal school event for a total of 2 hours per participant. According to Creswell (2013), the researchers should use their five

senses to capture behaviors in the field. I took notes as the principal interacted with stakeholders from their school; these varied from students, teachers, community members and parents in a natural school environment. Field notes were a part of the member checking process and informed the second interview and the focus group questions. I observed one-on-one interactions that the principals had with AA males during hallway walkthroughs and classroom visits as well as conversations with their staff about expectations for discipline and academics. The in-school observation such as walkthroughs allowed me to see the day-to-day routine of the principal and natural reactions and interactions to students and staff. The afterschool observations revealed their leadership style during meetings and explicit demonstrations of the vision of the principal in action. This data provided an opportunity to compare interview concepts to observation notes to determine if the principal's vision emerged in their daily interactions with students and staff.

Documents. During observations and interviews, artifacts were acquired in the natural environment. While walking the hallways observing the principals, I took photographs of bulletin boards. I collected handouts during faculty meetings that reflected the priorities of the work at hand. Yin (2003) states that physical artifacts can be important component to the overall case. I collected documents to gain insight on leadership style, priorities, and cultural connections.

Focus Group. The focus group semi-structured interview was held with four of the participants was videotaped to capture facial gestures, body language and overall interactions amongst the group. Creswell (2013) states that, "Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviews will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other" (p. 164). In the study, the principals were familiar with each other from their monthly principal meetings and had gained trust and collegiality with one another over time when they served as assistant principals in this district. This created a cultural community for them to freely voice their

opinions where they had a sense of belonging. Principals felt comfortable talking about district initiatives, strengths and weaknesses of their position, and current concerns and problems in education because they had a safe place with their colleagues to have a forum for open dialogue. The collegiality began with laughter and shared experience leading to deep thoughtful discussion of their experience as AA male principals. The focus group protocol is included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began with inductive reasoning finding prominent ideas from the data that presented itself. According to Creswell (2013), the inductive process involves working between the themes and the database repeatedly to establish a set of themes from the “bottom up” (p. 45). The main patterns were categorized to provide insights on principal’s perspective. The first phase analysis yielded 11 themes by examining individual cases: identifying themselves as role models, empathy vs. sympathy, caring conversations, cultural intersections, parental communication, men as nurturers, high expectations, building relationships, intentional hiring of male staff members, safety, and servant leadership. Creswell (2013) suggests that participants are a part of shaping the themes through a collaborative process, which occurred in this study through semi-structured interviews allowing participants to elaborate on emerging themes, and for the researcher to ask probing questions to elicit more information on prevalent topics along with triangulation of data. The second phase involved across case comparison on all types of data. Member checking was used during the focus group interview to capture rich data and memos were written to reflect on the researcher’s thinking about the data. This process was lead through deductive reasoning by using the 11 initial themes to find across case similarities. This second phase lead to eight themes: building relationships, servant leadership, effective communication, role models, high expectations, sympathy vs. empathy, intentional hiring of

male staff, and cultural intersections. Specific interview protocols were used to incorporate member checking through an emergent process.

The last phase involved triangulation, deductive reasoning, and member checking. Two themes were eliminated: intentional hiring of male staff and sympathy vs. empathy. Intentional hiring of male staff did not present thematically across cases and therefore was not a prevalent theme for all five participants. Sympathy vs. empathy overlapped with several of the ideas presented in high expectations. The last step was to connect themes to overarching ideas emerging through servant leadership. The researcher decided to present sympathy vs. empathy as part of high expectations due to a natural overlap. According to Maxwell (2005) triangulation is a “strategy that reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method, and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops” (p. 112). Triangulation was used in all three phases to reduce bias and to make more accurate generalizations. The data analysis process is illustrated in three phases in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Data Analysis

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
The data analysis began with inductive reasoning finding prominent ideas from the data that presented itself in each case.	Specific interview protocols, reviewing all sources and an emergent process that incorporated member checking	Deductive reasoning continues and focus on triangulation
Analysis yielded 11 themes by examining individual cases: identifying themselves as role models, empathy vs. sympathy, caring conversations, cultural intersections, parental communication, men as nurturers, high expectations, building relationships, intentional hiring of male staff members, safety, and servant leadership.	Across case comparison and types of data. Deductive reasoning emerges	Member Checking across cases
Triangulation of interviews through artifacts, and observations.	Themes are reduced and refined down to 8: Building relationships, servant leadership, effective communication, role models, high expectations, sympathy vs. empathy, intentional hiring of male staff, cultural intersections	Themes are reduced to 6 major themes: Building relationships, servant leadership, effective communication, role models, high expectations, caring conversations

Case Profiles

This research study consisted of five cases from the same school district. All cases were AA male principal who had been in their position at least a year. The cases ranged in age from 38-46 and the length of time in their current position ranges from 1-4 years. They all lead schools with at least 50% of their student population being African American, over 80% of their student population is considered free/reduced lunch in a large urban school district. They also lead elementary schools with over 300 total student enrollment and all but one school have teacher retention rates over 90%. Three out five schools met their Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) for the 2014-2015 school year, meaning their students had made academic gains and overall progress on their state testing accountability system. The information is presented in Table 4 below. Participants are represented by pseudonyms along with age and experience in the position.

Table 4

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Years As a Principal	Total Enrol lment	Number of AA male students	% of AA students	Teacher Retention Rate	% of students on Free/ Reduced Lunch
Mr. Wilder	38	3	364	151	85.7	67.7	92
Mr. Jones	46	3	450	109	50	96.6	80.9
Mr. Muncie	41	3	626	160	55	95.7	93.5
Mr. Riley	35	4	619	264	86.1	90	86
Mr. Roberts	36	1	438	167	71.5	90.6	92

Mr. Wilder. He has been an educator for 13 years; he became an administrator through an alternative certification program. He attended the school district where he now serves as principal. He grew up in an urban setting in the Southeast region of the United States. His family lived in the neighborhood of the school. He has worked in this district as an Assistant Principal at a middle school before becoming an elementary principal. He attended college on a basketball scholarship on the West Coast.

Mr. Jones. He has been an educator for 21 years; he became an administrator after changing his major in college from Computer Science. He attended the school district where he currently serves as principal. He received a basketball scholarship to attend a local university. Mr. Jones is also a preacher and a member of a Black fraternity. He grew up in an urban area that was predominantly African American. He worked in the district as an elementary assistant principal before becoming an elementary principal. He describes his K-12 experience as being positive due to several AA role models in the building.

Mr. Muncie. He has been an educator for 17.5 years; he attended a local university in the same city as the current school district. He attended the school district where he currently serves as principal. He grew up and now resides in the same area that he grew up in and this is the same area where his current school is located. He was a teacher and assistant principal at the school where he is now the principal. He has not worked in any other school. His former principal, an AA female, was a mentor to him who helped prepare him for this position. He was raised in a single parent home during the initiation of bussing.

Mr. Riley. He has been an educator for 14 years; he attended a university outside of this area. He did not attend school in the district where he serves as principal. He does not live in the area where he serves as principal but grew up in an urban setting. He was a middle school assistant principal

before obtaining an elementary principal position. His children attend the school that he is currently serving. He was the first one of his family to graduate from college. He attended college on financial aid and played football. He describes his K-12 experience as unpleasant due to learning difficulties.

Mr. Roberts. He has been an educator for 10 years. He grew up in the suburbs and attended the school in the district where he now serves as a principal. He is bi-racial but considers himself to be AA because that is how he was always perceived in school and the community. He described the awkwardness growing up when he was out in public with his Caucasian side of the family. He was an elementary assistant principal before he became a principal. He attended an HBCU on an academic scholarship and played football. He applied only for his current school when pursuing an elementary principal position so as to work closely with students of color.

Chapter Four: Perception and Experience of AA Principals

I, Too, Sing America

I, too, sing America.
 I am the darker brother.
 They send me to eat in the kitchen
 When company comes,
 But I laugh,
 And eat well,
 And grow strong.
 Tomorrow,
 I'll be at the table
 When company comes.
 Nobody'll dare
 Say to me,
 "Eat in the kitchen,"
 Then.
 Besides,
 They'll see how beautiful I am
 And be ashamed--
 - Langston Hughes (1994)

The purpose of this case study is to investigate the lived experiences of African American (AA) male principals post Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) ruling and examine their leadership style, and influence on AA boys and the communities in which these students reside. The following research questions were examined:

1. What are the experiences of five AA male elementary principals in a large urban district located in the Southeastern United States post Brown vs. Board of Education?
2. What are the leadership styles and characteristics of these AA male principals?
3. How do these AA male principals understand their ability to interact using cultural resources and cultural intersections with AA male students and their families?

Chapter four includes the following themes derived from analysis of participant interviews, school-based documents, questionnaires, and field observations: building relationships with students, teachers, and parents; caring conversations; using effective communication; setting high expectations;

serving as role models; and belief in servant leadership. This chapter includes perspectives and experiences from each participant on AA male students and their leadership experiences post Brown vs. Board of Education ruling. Vignettes are included to illustrate thick descriptions of principals' encounters with AA boys and establish the meaningful relationships that occur when interactions take place. Direct quotations from principals articulate their beliefs about AA boys and their leadership style's influence on the AA boys' school experience. While each finding is presented as answering a particular research question, the themes act as an ensemble that captures the lived experiences of these AA principals. Question one is answered by a single theme that acts to contextualize the rest of the findings. Question two is answered by three related themes that establish key leadership styles, and question three is answered by two related themes that illustrate the principals' use of cultural resources. One of the findings, effective communication, answers both question one and two and is further explained in the caption. Figure 2 below lists each finding and its relationship to the research questions mentioned above.

Figure 2. Research Findings

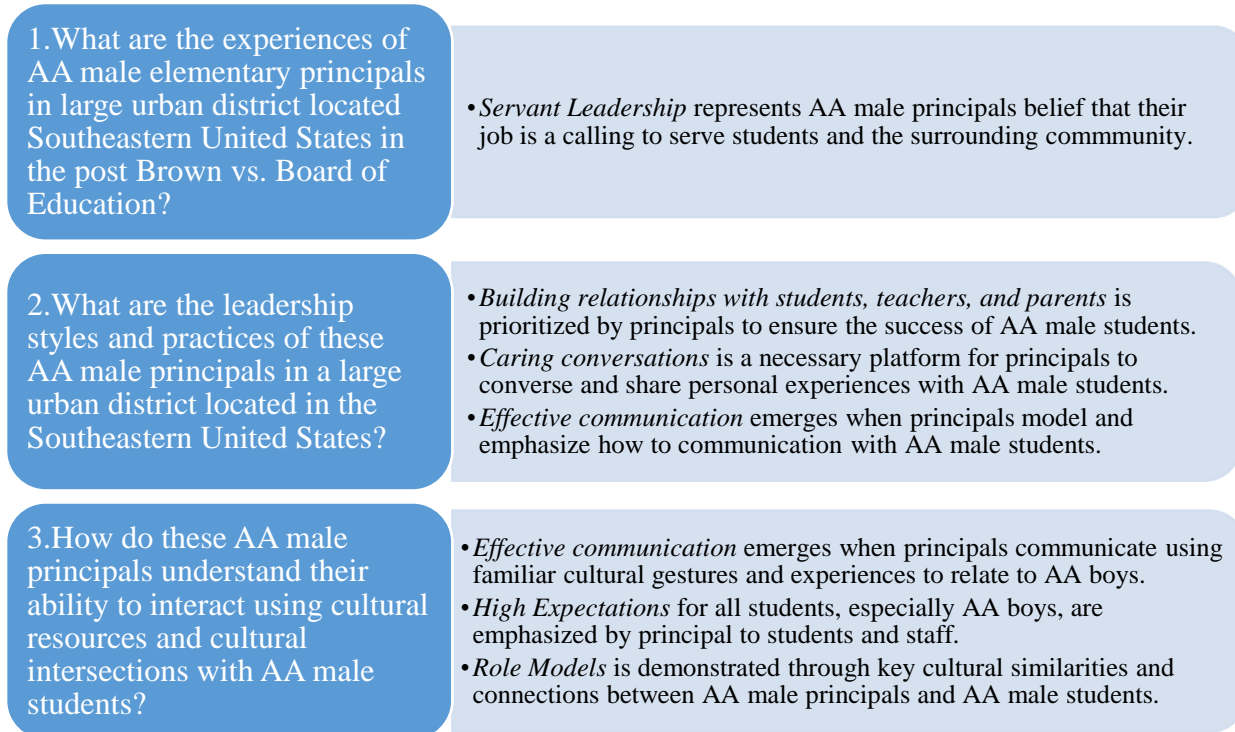


Figure 2. Effective communication is mentioned twice due to its ability to answer both question one and two. Effective communication is a leadership style as well as cultural resource used to relate to and with AA male students.

AA Male Principal Experience post Brown vs. Board of Education

Question one is explained through servant leadership; it is the overarching theme that explores principals' belief about their role post Brown vs. Board of Education. Servant leadership is the primary experience of all five principals. Building relationships, caring conversations, and effective communication are the key leadership practices identified that embody servant leadership. These three themes are explained first because these practices solidify the principals' experience and philosophy of servant leadership. Next, high expectations and role models are explained to manifest critical approaches to servant leadership. Principals assert that they are servant leaders and it is clearly illustrated in their practices and approaches: building relationships with students, teachers, and parents; caring conversations; effective communication; high expectations; and role models. Servant leadership is explored last to summarize principals' primary leadership experience and philosophy. Servant leadership is the core philosophy of the AA male principals illustrating how their work is a calling through which they serve students, parents, teachers, and the community to improve the education at their schools. Based on their experiences, servant leadership is a strong component that defines their leadership role as an urban AA male principals post Brown vs. Board of Education ruling.

Leadership Styles

Question two is addressed by three related themes that capture the leadership styles and characteristics of AA male principals: building relationships, caring conversations, and effective communication. These findings work together as conditional themes where each practice supports and develops the others. Building relationships represents the foundation of each participant's leadership style: Principals valued relationships with all stakeholders as a requirement of effective leadership. Relationships with students were created through and enabled by caring conversations. Engaging in regular caring conversations with students enabled principals to fill a void in students' lives. Caring

conversations set the stage for effective communication to emerge. Effective communication allowed students to speak on a more personal level with principals. These three themes, illustrated in the pyramid in figure three, demonstrate the core leadership practices that allow the principals to promote high expectations and serve as role models for AA boys. All three findings form a solid platform that represents servant leadership. Building relationships is the foundation of the pyramid because the relationship with the students opens the door for the other themes to surface. All three themes are interconnected due to the conditional relationship: building relationships, caring conversations, and effective communication, and are immersed in servant leadership as key leadership practices.

Cultural Resources and Intersections

Question three is answered by three themes that exemplify the principals' abilities to use cultural resources when interacting with AA males. Using effective communication, setting high expectations and serving as role models demonstrate the cultural intersections at play when AA principals and AA boys communicate their shared experiences. These themes are approaches that manifest participants' servant leadership. Effective communication answers two research questions because it is a practice that demonstrates the principal's leadership style, but also is a transparent venue for cultural intersections. These two themes: setting high expectations and serving as role models are explained after building relationships, caring conversations, and effective communication have emerged. Once trust is gained through the core three themes, principals expressed the need to establish high expectations and serve as role models by demonstrating what an AA male can do beyond stereotypical roles. These approaches are an integral part of building relationships, caring conversations, and effective communication because principals modeled and emphasized setting high expectations and serving as role models when communicating with students and staff. Principals demonstrated this through their professional behaviors and professional development of teachers. All

five themes are encircled by servant leadership in Figure 3 because they envelop the servant leadership philosophy. The following themes play an integral role in understanding the research questions at hand.

Figure 3. Theme Diagram

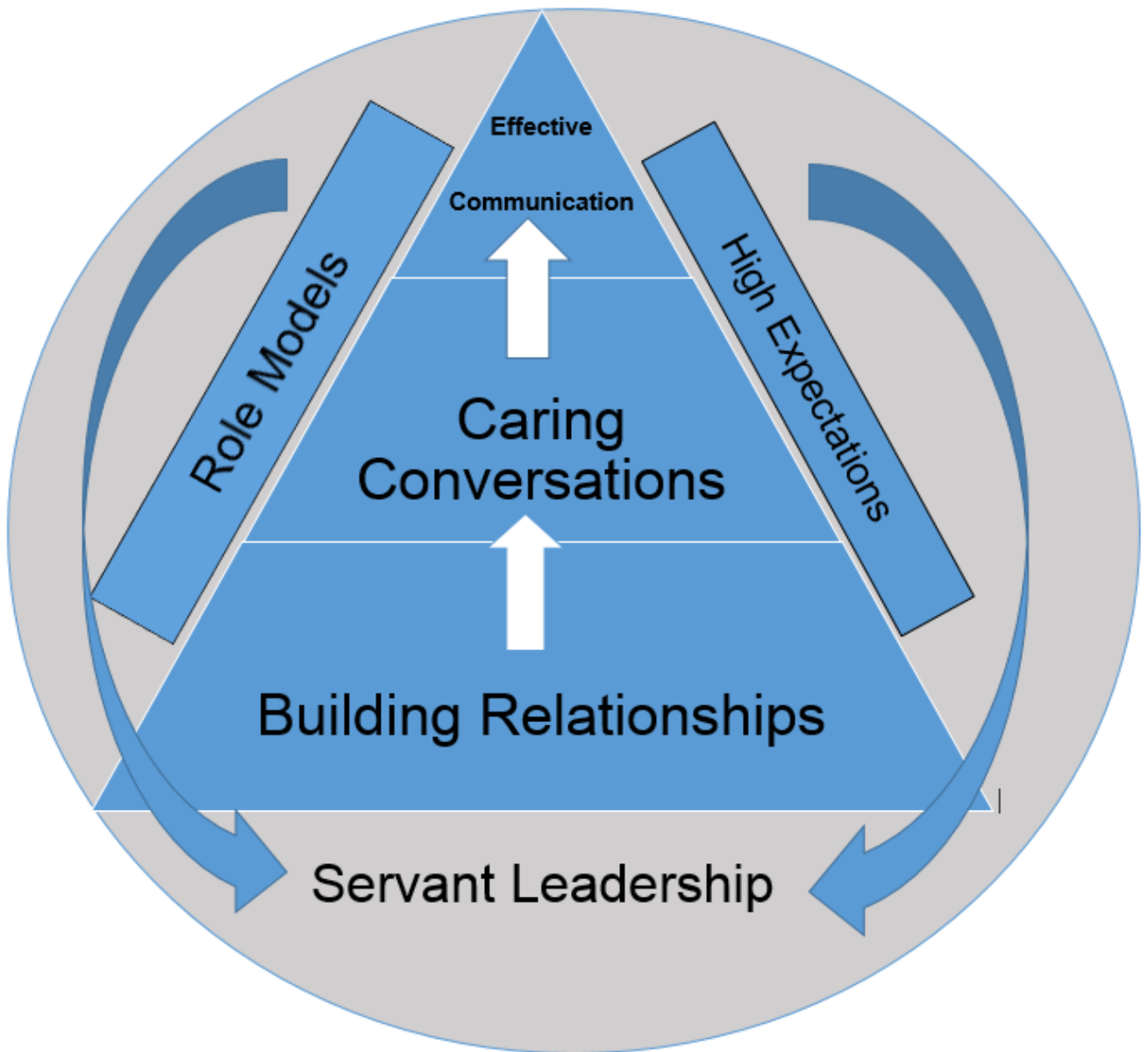


Figure 3 illustrates the connectedness of the six themes. Three major themes: building relationships, caring conversations, and effective communication are immersed in a pyramid to demonstrate the conditional relationship. Building relationships is the foundation for caring conversations and effective communication. Effective communication occurs during caring conversations. Role models and high expectations are adjacent to these three because these practices are demonstrated through the approach of being a role model and setting high expectations. All five themes are encircled by servant leadership which is the philosophy that manifested across the other themes. Each theme along with key supporting evidence is presented in the remainder of this chapter.

Building Relationships

Principals prioritized building relationships as a key leadership practice. It is essential to laying the foundation for caring conversations and effective communication to emerge. Principals built relationships with students, teachers, and parents to gain access in AA male students' lives to enhance their ability to succeed. Principals build relationships intentionally with AA male students and parents to enhance their school experience by capitalizing on cultural resources and shared experiences.

Building relationships with students. Principals' leadership styles prioritized the need to build relationships with their students, specifically AA male students, through intentional daily dialogue with them. Principals reported that their successes with students were dependent on their relationships with the students and their parents. Principals asserted that they take time out of their day to build these relationships with all their students, especially with AA boys who have difficulties in school. They make these connections to improve their outcomes at school. Many of the students seek the principals out to help them resolve problems that they encounter at school and at home.

Mr. Roberts emphasized the need to build relationships with students, particularly those with high needs. Mr. Roberts explained:

My goal is to build relationships with everyone. Just with the nature of my job I start off building relationships with kids in trouble ...It is hard with so many kids. When I hear kids' stories I cannot help but go and reach out to them and try to build those relationships. (interview, April 13, 2016)

Mr. Roberts emphasized the necessity of forming relationships with AA boys as an important part of his day in light of the stressors students face. Similarly, Mr. Wilder expressed relationship building as the key difference to help students achieve at high levels and believes it helps them through their daily struggles. Mr. Wilder stated that, "AA boys they tend to struggle slightly worse than other students" (interview, March 2, 2016). He described the difference as, "Relational. My thing is all my students can achieve. It is trying to engrain it in their mindset." He believes that it begins with "relationships before you can tap into what you want them to learn... They have to know how much you care." Mr. Wilder acknowledged the struggle of AA boys and emphasized their need for strong relationships at school to help solve academic concerns.

Mr. Muncie agreed that this bond is essential to the growth of AA boys as indicated by the following comment: "The key to it is building relationship... You have to have that rapport. If you do not have it you're not going anywhere." In the focus group, Mr. Muncie stated that his colleague noticed his like-mindedness about building relationships. Relationships, which reflects how he defines a key characteristics of his leadership style:

Like Mr. Roberts gave me a compliment yesterday and he did not even know it. He noticed by the way I talk. I am all into building relationships. That's what I want people to see when they see me and the leadership role. (focus group interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Muncie emphasized how building relationships with students is a necessity in his leadership style and it does not go unnoticed by his colleagues.

Mr. Riley summarized the value of building relationships in the following statement: “Matters not to me how bad the student is. The worse the student, the better the relationship needs to be” (April 26, 2016). Mr. Riley values relationships with students and the more the student struggles the more time will be spent building relationships. All five participants put forth time and effort to build relationships as a tool to effectively communicate with AA males on a personal level. Principals emphasized building relationships as key to their leadership style and essential to improving the school experience of AA boys.

Building relationships between teachers and AA boys. Principals emphasized building relationships to their teachers to build positive, caring relationships with students. Despite racial, cultural, or social-economic differences, participants believed building relationships eliminated barriers. Throughout observations and interviews, principals supported teachers building authentic relationships, in order to find success with AA male students. Principals expressed the importance of teachers building relationships through professional development training, modeling, and reiterating their importance—prioritizing the role of relationships with students to all teachers and staff members.

According to Mr. Wilder, teachers who build relationships with AA boys can connect with them despite gender differences: “Specifically for those boys, they respond to males different than female teachers sometimes. If you can find a teacher that can cultivate that relationship you can get a lot of mileage out of them” (interview, March 2, 2016). Mr. Wilder suggested that teachers should build relationships to enhance AA boys’ academic experience “...male or female students in general there has to be a relationship ... They will not work for you if they feel you do not have their best interest at heart-- that is for any of them.” Mr. Wilder encouraged his teachers to build relationships to improve

students' academic achievement throughout the day with morning time "designated to classroom community building and an opportunity every morning to try to cultivate those relationships with students" (interview, March 2, 2016). By building time in the schedule for relationship building activities, teachers are required to consider relationships as essential as any other subject matter.

Likewise, Mr. Muncie prioritized building relationships by modeling for teachers and building administrators. He told a story regarding his computer teacher who was struggling with a challenging student. He walked down the hallway to the child who was being non-complaint. After conversing with Mr. Muncie, the student complied with his direction. Mr. Muncie attributed this to the "conversation piece" he had with the student "that built that relationship with him" (interview, March 8, 2016). A community member was visiting the school that day and observed this interaction. The visitor commented on how she was impressed by Mr. Muncie's interaction with this student, without knowing he was the principal. He asserted, "If you're not going to do it, they [teachers] are not going to do it." Mr. Muncie considers this type of modeling critical to developing his teachers. Instead of just talking about building relationships, Mr. Muncie made a point to model these positive interactions with students to encourage teachers to follow in his footsteps.

Mr. Riley stressed the importance of teachers taking time to building relationships with students. He stated, "You have to build positive relationship with every student in your class" although it does not ensure that "you will have good interaction every single day, or you will not lose your cool, or that students will behave all the time." Mr. Riley recognized the benefits of building relationships for his staff in regard to classroom management. Mr. Riley understood, "The stronger the relationships are the less problems you are going to have from students" (interview, June 1, 2016). This understanding suggests that strong relationships have the ability to decrease discipline problems in the classroom.

Mr. Roberts also felt that his staff must grow in the area of building relationships to meet the needs of AA male students and initiate interactions to improve on this important skill: “There are teachers who relationship building is not their strength. It is not they are not good teachers. Relationship building is just not their thing, their strength” (interview, April 13, 2016). He combatted this lack of skills by having “...conversations and presenting information whether it is through email or staff meetings or professional development days about the importance of building those relationships and what a difference that makes.” He believes building relationships is a joint effort: “I challenge my teachers all the time to take time out to build relationships. I am going to build relationship with our kids, your kids. I expect you to work with me in building a relationship with the kids.” As a leader, he expects teachers to work just as hard as he does to build relationships with students.

Mr. Jones utilized faculty meetings to remind teachers of the importance of building relationships with their students. In an interview, Mr. Jones reflected on a time when he showed a video to his staff that demonstrated the power of saving just one starfish and its relationship to saving one child’s life. He smiled when discussing the change that occurred once a teacher embraced the idea of building relationships. He recalled how a particular teacher had trouble relating to AA males: He said, “Those two kids were struggling in her class but they started doing better” (interview, March 3, 2016). By taking time to teach how to build relationships at faculty meetings, he was able to reach a teacher struggling to identify with AA boys in her class. By prioritizing building relationships, he found this was a powerful tool to impact students on a personal level. Mr. Jones maximized professional development to provide his staff with the tools to connect with AA boys through beneficial interactions.

Building relationships with parents. Four out of five principals also placed an emphasis on building relationships with parents to facilitate their work. These principals consider parents to be an integral part of student success and seek out relationships with them. Principals reported that parents

often trust their advice and communicate student needs to them without hesitation; this was evident in an observation with Mr. Muncie. An AA parent patiently waited two hours for a conference with Mr. Muncie and refused an offer of help from the Assistant Principal (AP). Mr. Muncie related that although the AP is AA, she is from a rural setting and often found difficulty relating to the urban experience. Mr. Muncie attributed this to the relationship he had built with the family and his connection to the community in which he grew up. Mr. Muncie described himself as the “students and the parents’ principal. Students and parents, then my staff” (interview, March 8, 2016). Mr. Muncie has to balance supporting all of his stakeholders. He stated:

I have to make sure when my parents come in to challenge my teachers that they understand I’m a united front with my teacher, but also I’m smart enough to realize that we do make mistakes as professionals. Parents know I’m supporting them as well.

He builds relationships with parents by being a listening ear: “I am here to hear you [parents] out and listen to you as well.” These comments illustrate the level of commitment he has to supporting all stakeholders, particularly the students and parents that he serves. A key characteristic of his leadership is developing and valuing the trust they have in him. He believes parents should “have an equal voice to share with me” (interview, March 8, 2016). Parents want to speak with him because they know they will be heard and their needs addressed to help their child succeed. Mr. Muncie provides parents with an opportunity to share concerns and wants them to be vocal about their child’s experience. The respect the parents have for him allows Mr. Muncie to build relationships with students and interact with them on personal level.

Mr. Roberts goes beyond the school to build relationships with parents. He conducted “home visits to try to be proactive with the kids and parents” during the summer before each school year started (interview, March 23, 2016). He identified one leadership challenge as reaching “people who do

not come in the building including parents.” Mr. Roberts considers this an area of growth because he needs “to do a better job at building those relationships. I do think that is crucial.” He credits himself with the “gift of making people feel at ease and welcome” therefore he “really wants parents to feel that way and to call me.” He described his goal of having an open door policy with all his parents; he wants to maintain a welcoming environment where they are able to air their suggestions and concerns. As far as the parents with whom he has built relationships with he asserted, “I think they really listen to me and take my advice on things we discuss” (interview, April 13, 2016). Mr. Roberts values these relationships and affirms the importance of these relationships by making home visits and emphasizing its importance by recognizing it as a growth area.

Mr. Riley affirms the importance of building relationships; he explained, “We need strong relationships with our parents for our school to be successful” (interview, April 26, 2016). Mr. Riley reported a level of comfort that he did not have previously as a middle school assistant principal. Being older than the parents of the elementary age children he leads and enabled him to feel like he, “made a name and reputation for himself” with parents. He explained “I’m the old man now... I’ve grown to feel more comfortable and I’m not afraid to tell a parent anything because it comes from a loving place.” This reputation empowers him: “I’m not going to tell a parent anything that is not good for their child and in the best interest of their child.” He is able to offer parental advice on discipline at school and at home to essentially serve as a parenting role model. In an interview he described a time when a parent called him from a store asking for help with his student:

It is not out of the ordinary for parents to bring their kid here after they have left Douglas Elementary... I can get a call on my cell phone, “Mr. Riley a student is here and he is in a store acting a fool. Can you talk to him?” This is a dad calling me and I say, “Yes, sure. Put him on the phone.” I talk to the student and dad gets back on the

phone. The dad says, “He’s straight Mr. Riley. Thank you.”...The parents, I appreciate them, and they really do respect me, and I cannot see my daddy calling anyone to say can you talk to so and so, but I do not judge parents for that. I appreciate it because again *in that* is the relationship that I have with that father and the son, to be helpful.

(interview, June 1, 2016)

This phone call further affirmed his reputation and closeness with the parents. It reinforced the power in this relationship: An AA father sought help from the AA principal in situation outside of school to help an AA boy improve his behavior. This interaction illustrates a bond that extends beyond the walls of the school and the principals’ willingness to help a student during non-duty hours.

Mr. Jones believes reaching out to the parents helps him as well as staff members. He started a new initiative aimed at improving relationships with parents: “I instructed my teachers this year to contact parents on a rotational basis—four to five parents each week to build positive relationships with parents” (interview, March 31, 2016). Mr. Jones suggested that there are tremendous benefits from contacting parents on a positive note and seeking out those relationships: “When it becomes or if comes that time to talk about a negative, you would have that relationship with the parent and they know that you are not the enemy.” Mr. Jones recognized the importance of building relationships with parents so they are more receptive when trying to meet the needs of the students during times of concern. This initiative reinforced the collaborative nature of the principal, teacher, and parent to ensure success of the child.

The AA male principals prioritize building relationships at three levels with students, teachers, and parents. Principals seek out relationships with AA male students due to their similar experiences and purposefully establish strong ties with them and their parents. Their teamwork with parents builds trust with students, which further solidifies their realm of their relationship both in and out of school.

The principals intentionally teach, model, and emphasize building relationships with their staff to ensure positive relationships especially with AA males who struggle academically and behaviorally at their schools. These relationships are mutually beneficial to the principal and to the student by forming a bond that allows them to converse with their students on a daily basis about their needs. Building relationships establishes the conditions for caring conversations to naturally occur as they build trust, love, and honesty between one another.

Caring Conversations

Caring conversations were a critical means of building relationships with the AA boys throughout the school day. A caring conversation acted as a central venue for principals to nurture AA boys by conversing with the boys about both school and home issues. Caring conversations are natural parts of each principal's day to build positive relationships and are mutually beneficial to both parties; they were initiated both by the principal and the student. The principals demonstrate how much they care about the well-being of the students by making personal connections. The student has a voice by sharing details of his life and the principal may be able to assist the student.

During school observations with Mr. Muncie, Mr. Riley, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Roberts, I found them engaging in empowering, caring conversations to help AA boys remain in the classroom without disruptions to the learning environment. I observed Mr. Jones have one such conversation:

While Mr. Jones was doing his morning walkthrough around the building, greeting students and teachers in every class. One of his teachers announced to the class that Mr. Jones had recently won a principal award. The classroom immediately went into an uproar with applause and cheers, but every classroom seemed to light up when he entered. I could tell that students looked forward to seeing him by their big smiles and endless waving to get his attention. As he walked down the primary hallway he saw a

student, a grumpy looking AA boy, walking away from his teacher. Mr. Jones immediately went over to the child and said, “Where are you going?” The student immediately turned around and stood in place. Mr. Jones said to the teacher, “He can walk with me! Thank you.” He noticed the difficulty the teacher was having and immediately stepped in to support her and show her he appreciated her effort to deescalate the child but it was his turn to redirect the child so she could continue teaching. He put his arm around the child in a fatherly way and the young man walked next to him as they have a conversation. He never left his side or jerked away as they walked down the hallway. Mr. Jones is tall in stature. The young man looked up at him the entire time hung onto his every word. Mr. Jones said, “Are you working hard? Do not just look at me answer me!” The boy replied, “I’m being good. I’m tired!” Mr. Jones and the child talked about staying up too late and how six hours of sleeps is not enough and how the child has to be responsible for cutting the T.V. off. He took the young man to the counselor’s office and got a cot and a pillow. He told the counselor that the young man needs 35 minutes of sleeps and to set a timer, so he can go back to class. He reminded the student of his expectation for him before he leaves. Mr. Jones said, “I got compassion today but not tomorrow! You better go to bed! You have to be ready to work when you come to school!” The child nodded his head in agreement and laid down on the cot. (observation, April 21, 2016)

During this observation with Mr. Jones, a caring conversation led to the principal assisting the student in a nurturing way. This conversation allowed the student to articulate his needs and the principal to come up with a solution to keep him out of trouble in the classroom. This interaction demonstrated the

trust between the child and the principal. The young man is honest about why he did not perform in the classroom without fear of judgment or repercussions.

The role of caring conversations occurred in observations and in interviews and became even more apparent in the focus group. When Mr. Riley discussed the disproportionate amount of suspensions of AA boys compared to their white peers, he explained disciplining AA boys through a caring conversation and tough love. Mr. Riley valued these conversations because the dialogue kept the boys out of trouble and helped them with the decision making process. During the focus group, all four principals discussed the “magnetic” energy between the boys and themselves due to the relationships they had worked to build. Mr. Riley described an example of a magnetic interaction during the focus group that happened recently at his school:

The young man came up to me and stated ‘let me talk to you’ very quick. It is all about being proactive that conversation could have saved a potential situation that could have resulted in out of school discipline had I not been there. (interview, June 1, 2016)

Mr. Riley valued these conversations and prides himself on being proactive with students. Students initiate these conversations because they are positive and powerful. The conversation between the principal and students is personal and solution oriented. While observing Mr. Riley conducting informal walkthroughs through every classroom, caring conversations naturally occurred in the first classroom we visited:

As he entered the Art room two AA boys immediately raised their hands. The teacher called on the first one and he got up approached Mr. Riley. He said, “I need to talk to you!” Mr. Riley says, “That is what I’m here for. What do you need?” The young man says, “The teacher says I’m not following directions. It is cold over there.” Mr. Riley says, “Are we fixing or keeping the problem? Can you sit next to Thomas? I was talking

to your dad the other day! Did you learn how to tie a tie? Do you need another seat?"

The student begins to tell him about tying a tie with his father and how he can solve this problem by sitting in another seat. Then a second AA boy approaches him and says,

"Jessica is bothering me. She keeps talking to me!" Mr. Riley responds, "How does that affect you? Are you saying anything to her? Do you remember the poem you wrote?"

The student replies, "Yes sir!" Mr. Riley says, "If wrote that why you paying attention to her. Does her talking harm you? (He shakes his head no) Who is she to you?" The young man says, "Nobody!" Mr. Riley replies, "Ignore! Anything else you need from me?"

The principal gives the young man a thumbs up and he walks back to his seat smiling.

The teacher looks at the principal and smiles as well both students returned to the correct seats and continued on with class. (observation, April 26, 2016)

Through this interaction, a potential disruption was averted due to a caring conversation with the principal, made possible by the relationships built with the students. In each example, the students felt comfortable communicating with the principal about problems that were keeping them from being successful in class. The relationship was apparent based on the principal's knowledge of the students' writing, and the mention of the student's father. He was able to talk with the students on a personal level because he knows details about students' lives and families. Mr. Riley's proactive conversations had a unique flair due to the individualistic nature of the conversation. With the help of the principal, these boys are able to self-regulate after a conversation with the principal, which allows them to remain in the classroom and increase positive interactions at school.

Similarly, Mr. Roberts also reported students proactively seeking him out to engage in caring conversations even when he is out of the building. Mr. Roberts discussed a time that a student sought him out to merely have a caring conversation. The student left a note for him while he attended a

principal meeting because he prioritizes building relationships in his daily work. Mr. Roberts met with the student immediately during lunch: “He did not even want anything he just...he just wanted to talk. He hasn’t made many friends-- I found out when we talked at lunch today. I’m trying to hook him up with some good guys” (interview, April 13, 2016). The student sought him out to fill a void at school. He had been unable to make friends and utilized his relationship with the principal to alleviate the problem by seeking this conversation with the principal. The interaction demonstrates the strength of their relationship; the student felt comfortable expressing a concern to the principal.

Mr. Jones also reported having conversations during lunch that allow him to build relationships with students on a personal level: “I have lunch buddies who come by and they do not even have to schedule with me anymore. They just ask if I’m in here” (interview, March 31, 2016). A normal part of his day involved having students stop by to eat lunch with the principal instead of their classmates. Students choose to have one-on-one or group conversations with the principal to share their stories:

We will talk about school, home life. I have conversations to build relationships with AA boys. If you ask most of the kids if Mr. Jones loved them? They would say, “Yes” because I try to do things that make them understand we care. (interview, March 3, 2016)

Caring conversations are part of his daily routine that he values and now students come without notification because they know he will be there waiting for them. He talked with them about school and home, building a bond for future interactions.

Mr. Roberts reported one relationship with a student where he is able to disclose some of the pain and hurt he is feeling in his home life. In an interview Mr. Roberts described the conversation that enabled him to build a stronger relationship with an AA boy:

I am going to give you a success story, but according to statistics he should not fit this category. He is a fifth grader. He lives with a mother with an addiction of drugs. The student and his siblings live at a homeless shelter. His mom dropped him off there for a little while. I found out today that these children are at a home with no electricity and mom is often not home at night, but this student I told him he is so resilient. He did not know what that meant. But we ended up having a conversation we have a good relationship, but he trusted me. He told me this. He really according to statistics should not be doing this good. He is the oldest of four. A 5th grader, 10 or 11. He has four year old and one year old at home and he is kind of raising them. (interview, March 23, 2016)

Despite the hardships that the student faced, he is performing well academically. Mr. Roberts supported this young man by checking on him through his teachers, and had conversations with him to keep him motivated. This conversation enlightened Mr. Roberts on his home life and how it may have affected the boy throughout the school year, and allowed Mr. Roberts to have an opportunity to support him. The caring conversations are not just casual conversations; they are powerful in building trust.

These conversations are an integral part of the principals' day and sometimes take precedence over previously scheduled events. One such caring conversation interrupted a scheduled interview with Mr. Muncie:

As I was waiting in Mr. Muncie's office before an observation, he arrived with an AA boy with his fist clenched and a scowl on his face. Mr. Muncie said, "What is going on Treyvon?" The boy replies, "You made me get out of line!" Mr. Muncie admonished, "Fist balled up, was that necessary. What if I did that? I would get fired! Did I scream at you?" Young man angrily said, "No!" Mr. Muncie said, "Do we have a good relationship?" Young man more calmly responded, "Yes!" Mr. Muncie explained, "I

respect your mother and I know you do not want me to call. When you walk out I'm going to forget it happen. Do not I ride your bus sometimes (student nods in agreement)? I'm fair. You haven't had problems since you been here. Fist clenched looks bad. Man up and go back to class!" Student wiped his face and headed back to class with his hands relaxed. Mr. Muncie explained to me, "Everything doesn't need consequences!"

(observation, March 25, 2016)

This interaction is an example of how the principal used his relationship with the child to deescalate him without behavioral consequences such as in-school or out of school suspension. Through this caring conversation, the child realized that he overreacted to Mr. Muncie correcting his behavior in line. He calmed down and returned to class. The principal did not hear from that student again for behavioral concerns during the researcher's visit. He has a relationship with the child and his mother and demanded respect from him. By riding the bus and talking with the child, Mr. Muncie knew him well enough to help him deescalate a stressful situation in a calm, nurturing way.

Caring conversations are a critical platform for the relationship between the principal and the student to flourish and grow. These conversations allow both parties to gain information that will benefit them by sharing their similar experiences. The conversations are immersed in cultural intersections between both the student and the principal. This style of effective communication that allows them to develop a mutual respect is described below.

Effective Communication

When building relationships with AA boys, principals communicated with their AA students by connecting with them through cultural resources. They often referenced or used key cultural gestures or phrases when having caring conversations with their students. This type of

communication allowed the principals to effectively relate to the young men and their experience.

Mr. Riley described an interaction with an AA male where he dialogues with an AA boy sternly and in a nurturing, fatherly manner after the student had a behavior concern in the classroom. He believed his style of communication allows him to talk to the student in a more personal way not simply because he is a Black male. The interaction occurs smoothly because he established a relationship through cultural intersections with the young man:

...just because you are a Black male doesn't mean that you are going to have positive relationships with Black boys or be a great educator. Some of the worst educators I have seen in my life just happen to be Black males. Men who look like us think because I am a Black man on site, I am going to get respect; I am not going to put up with a thing. Everyone at this table worked to earn those relationships with kids, which allow us to pull them to the side, and say things that other people cannot say to them. (interview, June 8, 2016)

The relationship opened the door for the communication to happen but the communication sustains the relationship. Principals are able to correct AA male students with minimal tension because of the strength of the relationship. Other participants noted their similar ability to speak with AA males differently.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Riley conversed with AA boys in the same manner as AA males communicate in urban settings during teachable moments. Mr. Jones reported he used code switching with AA male differently depending on what message he is trying to get across. He described a different communication style with AA boys:

It depends on the message I'm trying to get across. You have to remind them you did not always wear a suit and tie. Sometimes I will use that tool in my kit with language. I do not use broken language, but slang they might understand better. I may say something like *been in the hood*. I may mention *the hood* a little bit more. You may have to handle yourself differently to particular students. I may have to connect by getting on the same ground. (interview, March 31, 2016)

Mr. Jones used terminology from their neighborhood to communicate with AA students to help them understand that he knows where they were coming from. He is able to tap into his cultural resources because he grew up in similar surroundings. He also articulated his positive interactions with students through cultural intersections: "My interaction with AA males, I try to make them positive even if it is a brisk walk down the hallway, and I give them a few fist pounds, give some high fives and what have you!" He was able to relate to the AA boys by using a common cultural greeting: high fives and fist pounds. He suggested that cultural intersections are necessary for both positive conversations and more firm interactions. He explained, "The ones that have behaviors issues-- I'm stern. I tell them what the consequences are going to be, and I make it work. I try to build them up" (interview, March 31, 2016). Essentially, Mr. Jones used his knowledge and experience as an AA male to communicate with AA boys in order to encourage and motivate them. By using his understanding of their journey he was able to scold them without opposition from the students.

Mr. Jones is also a pastor so he is able to communicate beyond just neighborhood connections. He translated his experience in the Black church when having caring conversations with his students. During an interview he talked about a time when an AA boy was sent to the office and a caring conversation evolved through a religious cultural connection:

A little boy comes to my office in the morning because he has behavior issues. The next two weeks I asked him to come to me. He asked me, “If had a good Easter?” Then the student told me he sung in the church choir, and he sung the song. [The principal proceeded to sing the song] He said, “You know that song?” I said of course I know that song. I told him I was a minister myself. It was a connection point. We already connected to a certain extent but this was another connection. He wanted to know what else does my principal do? He can *step*-- he is a *principal*! Then we talked about the fraternity. I went to the website. I told him you have to go to college. Just trying to inspire giving them something to look forward to. I do not run from it [religious conversations] but I do not push it. Sometimes it happens I do not hide it if they open the door and are inquisitive. (interview, March 31, 2016)

Mr. Jones’ initiation of a conversation with the AA boy demonstrated the overlap between caring conversations, effective communication, and the use of cultural resources. The conversation naturally led to cultural intersections and connectedness between the two. He was able to effectively communicate with the AA boy because he relates to several facets of his life: Black church, Black fraternities, and college aspirations. According to Mr. Jones, these cultural intersections allowed them to connect on a deeper level.

Four of the five principals described effective communication by teaching AA boys to code switch through their interactions and conversations they have with the AA boys about the power of language. According to Mr. Riley, “Code switching is absolutely real but I do not inherently teach in those specific terms. I definitely tell students school is a professional setting so you need to conduct yourself in that manner” (interview, June 1, 2016). He believes that students need to know that communication changes from one setting to another. He explained, “It is okay if you conduct yourself

or speak differently or behave differently in a different setting as long as your behavior is not putting you or anyone else in harm or danger” (interview, June 1, 2016). Mr. Riley discussed his use of code switching with an AA boy to redirect him after being removed from the classroom:

Every now and again, I communicate with him [the student] in a manner that others would not, but after picking him up there is a hugs and it is all right. You are going back to class. After I call your daddy, and I tell him that I pinned you up. So he can say thank Mr. Riley for doing that. Now get back to class. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Riley illustrated his relationship with the student by talking with him candidly then calling his dad who will support their interaction. In this situation he disciplined the child, scolded him, and ended the interaction with a nurturing hug. His relationship is solid with the student and the student’s father; thus, he is able to communicate to the father about the interaction necessary to get his son refocused to reenter the learning environment. His goal was to get him back to class after communicating to him his behavior was unacceptable. Similarly in the focus group interview Mr. Roberts asserted, that he “can take a kid aside to explain things in a different way than if I was talking to a group or teacher. That is about building a relationship I am very intentional about that from the moon and back” (interview, June 8, 2016). Language is a powerful tool used by the principal beyond the use of code switching. Mr. Roberts described a unique interaction in which one-on-one communication looks and feels differently because a relationship has been established where he can easily correct and redirect the AA male student. Due to his shared experience as an AA male, he was able to effectively communicate with him about issues that they have both experienced using language that is specific to the AA culture.

Likewise, Mr. Jones discussed code switching with his students to help them be successful in all settings. He affirms a need for AA males to code switch, “I do talk to the kids about code switching.

That fact is that in different places myself, I may have to code switch whether it is always best” (interview, March 31, 2016). As an educator he believes it is important for him to teach his AA males how to communicate as citizens of society: “From an educational point of view, we have to teach them how to handle themselves from one location to a different location. You have to carry yourself in a way to survive. That is reality.” Mr. Jones emphasized teaching AA boys to use code switching to effectively communicate in different settings. He suggested that being able to communicate is key to their survival as AA males and understands this because of the cultural similarities that he shares with his students. Mr. Wilder valued the same concept of code switching as a means of survival for AA boys:

There is a language and a way that you carry yourself around your friend, in your neighborhood, within your home. But when out in public, we have to navigate differently, and it is especially important to African American men. For the lack of a better term, it’s survival. (interview, June 15, 2016)

By sharing the same experience as AA boys, the principals communicated shared experiences that the boys identify with to help them navigate similar situations. The principals communicated key concepts such as code switching as essential to their survival. The boys valued their ideas and advice because the information is beneficial to their everyday life. The principals discussed giving examples from their own life to demonstrate the value of code switching with the boys. Mr. Jones explained to students the key differences in language from school to home:

I teach them about code switching. When I go back to the neighborhood, and check out my neighbors, my boys, I grew up with I may have a different tone may sound different using different words connecting to who I’m speaking with. (interview, March 31, 2016)

Mr. Jones taught his AA boys that language in the neighborhood involves slang, and inflections of the voice but their language should adjust based on their audience. Mr. Roberts also talked with AA boys about code switching from the workplace to home:

When I am talking to my friends from home, I do not talk to them like I'm talking to you now. There is way you have to be professional at work and there is the way I talk at home and outside of here. (interview, April 13, 2016)

Mr. Riley discusses his recent trip to visit some of his high school classmates in relation to code switching: "I might tell a student I talk completely differently. Just in Mexico in my classmate's wedding as the best man versus speaking, or interacting with you or with parents in a professional setting" (interview, June 1, 2016). The principals used experiences in their own life to demonstrate effective communication with people who look like them and people who are dissimilar to them. Mr. Roberts states, "I believe that is a key to success, being able to code switch" (interview, April 13, 2016). The principals taught communication skills to the boys by demonstrating communication on two different levels: principal talk vs. neighborhood talk so the boys can mirror this style, and communicate in the language appropriate to the school setting.

Effective communication occurs through caring conversations that are beneficial to both parties because the principal and student are able to develop a level of trust. Principals are able to connect with students on a more personal level using key cultural connections and shared experiences as AA males. Mr. Roberts summarizes this idea when he states: "The students can kind of relate because I look like them, talk like them, although I try to use proper grammar when I speak" (interview, March 2, 2016). Students are able to relate to them and principals are able to communicate more effectively using familiar territory. The principals use common language of AAs to communicate with the boys but also teach them how to code switch to navigate communication inside the school building. This

unique style of communication opens doors for discussion of high expectations for AA boys' learning and behavior in the classroom.

High Expectations

All five principals' key leadership practices: building relationships, caring conversations, and using effective communication directly connect to the ways in which principals set high expectations for academic performance and behavior for all students, including AA boys. These practices communicate the need for setting high expectations to teachers and how to transfer those high expectations to students more clearly. Setting high expectations begins with trust that is built through the relationship between the student and the principal. Once the solid relationship is established caring conversations become the platform for effective communication about the necessity for setting high expectations. High expectations emerge through caring conversations with students and conversations with staff members about setting high expectations for all children, particularly AA males. High expectations are made explicit through school pledges, setting high expectations with the teachers, and development of empathy not sympathy.

Importance of school pledges. Each principal's school has a pledge or belief statement that is communicated to and by students reminding them of their purpose as a student. Table 5 demonstrates the commonalities across their pledges and belief statements at their schools. Three of the five pledges emphasize high expectations, responsibility, and success of all students. Two of the pledges prioritize safety and learning. All five pledges illustrated in Table 5 relay a message to students and teachers promoting taking an active role in ensuring high expectations are met.

Table 5

School Pledges

Participant Name	Participant School	Pledge/Belief Statement	Audience
Mr. Wilder	W.E.B. Dubois Elementary School	We have to develop a community of self-sufficient learners. We have to work to positively develop our student's intellectual, social/emotional, physical, and moral well-being. We have to work together to create and sustain a positive, safe school community that is conducive to learning. We have to work together to plan and implement high-quality instruction based on content standards. We have to assess student learning daily and differentiate instruction based on data in order to meet the varying needs of students. Learning is a lifelong process, and we must model this to our students by continuing to seek out opportunities to grow personally and professionally. We must include families and the community and communicate to them the progress and needs of our students. Each student has the ability to learn, and we must guide them in reaching their full potential.	Teachers and Staff
Mr. Jones	Martin Luther King Elementary School	Cardinals Cooperate, Cardinals Always Try, Cardinals are Respectful and Responsible Citizens, and Cardinals are Eager to Learn	Students
Mr. Muncie	Bethune Cookman Elementary School	Join the Cookman team and be successful, Accept the consequences for my actions, Care about myself and others, Observe school rules at all times, and Be a responsible and hardworking student. With this pledge I can succeed!	Students
Mr. Riley	Frederick Douglas Elementary School	I will rise to the highest expectations. I will take responsibility for my actions. I will never give up; therefore I cannot fail. I am successful. I am smart. I am college and career bound. We are Douglas.	Students
Mr. Roberts	George Washington Carver Elementary School	Through high expectations, all students can achieve at or above grade level. Students learn best in a safe, consistent, nurturing learning environment. Students, as independent learners, can be successful members of society. Personal integrity should be encouraged. Success should be celebrated.	Teachers and staff

The principals often used the language from the pledges to articulate their leadership styles and expectations for students, especially AA boys. The pledges are communicated daily to students and staff through modeling, recitation, and reminders during hallway walks and one-on-one conversations.

Mr. Wilder describe his expectations of his staff and commitment to the students:

Our mission is we pledge to collaborate to provide intentional high quality instruction to compete and contribute to society throughout life. It falls back on our staff on a daily basis to make sure we are collaborating through the PLC process, through teaming to make sure the instruction reaches the best of the student to be able to obtain grade level standards and achievement, and that are able to move on to middle school and be successful in middle school. (interview March 2, 2016)

Mr. Wilder suggested that there is a collective responsibility of teachers and students to embody the pledge to further the expectations for student success through sound instruction.

At Mr. Riley's school, the creed is recited by students with him at the beginning of everyday during the morning announcements. The creed hangs in the main lobby as you walk into the school. Likewise, Mr. Muncie's school's pledge scrolls on a computer in the main lobby behind the greeter's desk. The visual display further shows the value of this document and its importance to the leadership. At Mr. Jones' school they also recite the pledge in the morning during the announcements. All five pledges emphasize both academic and behavior expectations for students to ensure character development and academic success. Mr. Jones made his beliefs very clear to students:

They know I do not play about what I want or need-- my expectations. One of my things I tell them: I will give you the best I got. Anything I have I will give it to you. All I ask is for you to give me the same. (interview, March 3, 2016).

This further implies the importance of the mutually beneficial relationship between the principal and the student. Both parties take an active role in the success of the student by giving their very best. The principal expected the AA boys to rise to high expectations by internalizing the creed: The creed also serves as a reminder when students are not performing at their best.

All five principals had a comparable school document that explicitly demonstrated high expectations for their students and this was also articulated in their interviews. Mr. Riley summarized the importance of his school's pledge:

We are Douglas, that is where all that comes from kids hear that every single day. Even when they are misbehaving or making bad decisions, there is not a time that we cannot go back to the creed and speak specifically to one of those lines. (interview, June 1, 2016)

This comment rings true for all the principals in regard to the importance of their beliefs being interwoven in the school's expectations for their students. For example, all five principals' school pledges communicate beliefs that high expectations for all students, through effort and quality instruction, is a priority in their leadership style. These school pledges also attest to their shared belief that AA boys will meet these expectations in order to learn at high levels.

Mr. Muncie expressed explicitly his beliefs about academic expectations: "There is no giving up putting their heads down. There is no quitting. NO child gives up. When I walk in a classroom everyone is working. You have to raise the bar for my kids" (interview, March 8, 2016). Mr. Muncie does not allow students to give up or make excuses. He believes that effort is essential along with providing rigorous instruction. This high level of academic expectations also extends to behavior: "Behavior, there is no form of disrespect for adults zero, I am zero tolerance for disrespect. It is not

going to happen” (interview, March 8, 2016). Mr. Roberts also emphasizes high expectations for behavior at his school: “I do expect them to do the right thing and do what’s right and make good choices” (interview, April 13, 2016). Each principal emphasized the recitation or display of the school pledge as a reminder to students of their purpose and potential by communicating high expectations for academics and behavior.

Mr. Muncie asserted that he does not believe in giving student rewards because they often lower the expectations by implementing a system that values extrinsic motivation:

Students expect some kind of reward at the end of the day or end of the week. When I get to be an adult, the police or judge doesn’t have a reward for you— not a reward—he has something for you but not what you want. I think we are setting them up by doing these point sheets that they have to get something at the end. I love what I do but nobody gives me anything when I do something good. That is not the expectation; you are here to do a job get your check and let’s keep it moving. If you cannot do it somebody else will. I think we have lost our kids by making them feel that they have to have a tangible item. (interview, March 8, 2016)

Like the other principals, Mr. Muncie believes that all students can work and should work at high levels. AA boys especially should not be allowed to opt-out or given low-level work. Mr. Riley discussed a time when he had to explain to AA boys what high expectations are and how you achieve them:

Everybody [AA male boys] wants to be LeBron James and the first thing I say to them is, “Do you know how much he practices?” “Naw, Mr. Riley he is good.” Well, less than 10,000 hours is in the book of liars. If someone is great they spend at least 10,000

at their craft. So in that conversation I say how many days after school is that. How many jump shots is that? This man is saying he is taking 50 to 60,000 jump shots a week. I will take you to the gym and I want you to just take 100 shots. They get to twenty-five and are like man I am tired. “He shoots that many?” “Yes” When you see people and they are gifted that does not mean you do not have to work at it. So that little sport analogy that so many kids want to be LeBron or be Kobe or be Kevin Durant, but having that conversation with them at the same time and tell them I was the complete opposite in the classroom. Look at the guys I grew up with they did not have to pay attention in the classroom, but I had to work my tail off for a “D” in trigonometry...” (interview, June 1, 2016).

Mr. Riley uses his own experience as a former college athlete to convey his message that goals are not achieved without perseverance and determination. The boys are able to relate to this message due to their cultural connectedness and awareness of the AA male basketball players. This caring conversation was based around the importance of high expectations by using effective communication through a shared interest, sports. All five principals prioritize setting high expectations for all students, specifically for AA boys both academically and behaviorally. Setting high expectations is an implicit part of their leadership style by communicating expectations to them on a daily basis in their creeds, commitment to them, and their conversations with them.

Setting high expectations with teachers. During faculty meetings Mr. Riley ask teachers to recite the school creed at the end to remind them of their commitment to the growth and development of every child and their part of making this a reality. He reiterates to the teachers that they are charged with a great responsibility: to empower students to embody the creed. He believes this can be achieved by teachers, “posting learning targets, making sure positive relationships are built, and making sure

learning is relevant as possible” (observation, May 24, 2016). Mr. Riley expects each teacher to demonstrate high expectations through rigor, relevance, and relationships. He values these educational practices and inspects them regularly to ensure high expectations for students.

Mr. Jones recognizes that his staff has to set high expectations for students to achieve, particularly AA males, by holding them to high expectations. He also emphasizes professionalism through his style of dress and communication with stakeholders. He held himself to the same high standard that he expected from his staff. He believes teachers have a major role in the academic success of students. Mr. Jones often reminds the teachers of his high expectations for students and staff:

We are the doorkeepers. We open doors for kids or we shut them. They know that is what I’m going to say. There is no opting out! We do not allow students to opt out and we cannot opt out as teachers and professionals. We have to figure out a way to reach our students so high expectations is a must and I have to. Most of the teachers when I first got here felt that they had high expectations. But they weren’t high enough.

(interview, March 31, 2016)

When Mr. Jones became the principal at King Elementary he raised expectations as he felt that they were not high enough for the children. For example, several teachers were resistant to teaching interventions in the classroom. At a faculty meeting he gave the teachers a picture of a broken ladder. Teachers discussed the how the ladder represents their low performing students. He describes his approach to help teachers understand that it is their job to reach all students:

Once they said a point I want to emphasize, I asked them to repeat it... I let them work their way to it. I guide them, facilitate more than tell them because just like with students you can tell them all day long but until they internalize it (interview, March 31, 2016).

After their discussion, Mr. Jones summarized a few key points:

You know we have students with broken rails. You cannot jump them up. You have to fix the broken rails and even when we fix them; look at that ladder it is still not going to be perfect. We can build where the child can learn. (interview, March 31, 2016)

Mr. Jones was adamant that they would meet the needs of all students even those who had instructional gaps.

He also believes that being understanding of students is essential but everyday life cannot get in the way of what they are trying to teach: “Understanding of trials and tribulations but yet we have to high expectation for them. They will try to meet those expectations if we put them there. If we have low expectations than they are going to stay” (interview, June 8, 2016). Mr. Jones further explained with an example from his experience as a principal: “Too much sympathy, you lower your expectations. You are allowing them not to bring in their homework, you are allowing their excuses to work.” He believes by allowing students to make excuses the standard is lowered and allows circumstances to block their success: “The empathy part is opening the door I understand, but I need my homework.” He believes that his staff has an integral part in setting high expectations: “That is my sermon we are the doorkeepers.” Mr. Jones believes that he and his teachers must try to open as many doors as possible for the students by setting high expectations and not allowing them to make excuses as to why they cannot be met. He instills in his teachers his passion for elevating students to reach their potential by expecting nothing but their very best. He believes that teachers can repair skills so they can be more successful every day.

Mr. Wilder feels, as a leader, it is his responsibility to make sure that sound instruction happens everyday: “I expect to see you [the teacher] providing your best teaching every day... That is why I try

to make my presence known as much as possible. You see that is a priority to me” (interview, March 2, 2016). He also finds it important to follow up on teachers’ instruction by conducting walkthroughs: “Teachers providing high quality instruction to kids and only way I know that is getting done is being in there myself” (interview, March 2, 2016). Mr. Wilder emphasized follow up and following through with teacher expectations as one of his key leadership characteristics.

Mr. Riley suggested that another important component of setting high expectations is modeling for teachers: “I am constantly wanting to model for our teachers what the expectation is. I’m always trying to live out what the expectation is. I cannot ask you to work hard if I’m not working hard.” His expectations are set and he follows them in his daily work therefore there is no argument about it:

The rule for the teachers: If I’m late then you feel free to be late. If I’m not working you do not need to work, but as long as I am modeling these expectations then there should not be much that I can ask you that you are not willing to do. (interview, April 26, 2016)

Mr. Riley makes a point to articulate his high expectations for daily instruction to teachers:

Teachers know that I expect them to be teaching the entire time. If not, down time leads to trouble. So if you are not teaching or students are not learning then it will lead to trouble. A lot of the trouble we have now is from students being frustrated, and I tell the teacher that is okay. It is all right for them to be frustrated they need to work hard. It’s not supposed to be easy. (interview, April 26, 2016)

Mr. Riley states that the goal is to develop: “A group of people who are committed to wanting to be here and embracing the challenge that we have in front of us” (interview, June 1, 2016).

Mr. Muncie asserts that not only do the teachers need to set high expectations but they need to have a belief in the students to make them want to achieve at high levels:

I think some of our students— it is all about expectations and connections with who is educating them... They want to make you proud, if they feel you believe in them. They want to do whatever it takes to reach that goal. (interview, March 8th, 2016)

Similarly Mr. Roberts states, “We have to hold them accountable and to high expectations and let them know that we care about them” (interview, April 13, 2016). Both principals assert that high expectations and building relationships are essential to AA boys’ success at school.

Mr. Wilder expressed the encouragement he gives his AA boys to meet his high expectations:

There are infinite possibilities for you know if you take advantage of what’s been put before you. No one is going to do it for you. You have to take advantage of the opportunities being presented to you and grasp them and go forward with them. (interview, March 2, 2016)

All five principals believe setting high expectations is a non-negotiable for academics and behavior in their schools. High expectations are communicated to both students and teachers on a daily basis through the principal’s school pledge and commitment statements. According to Mr. Muncie, “It is about consistency and expectations set with the staff” (interview, March 8, 2016). The principals take an active role in monitoring the implementation of high expectations and use faculty meetings as a way to discuss and reiterate its importance. The principals believe their teachers must understand how expectations impact their students and their ability to succeed, especially for AA males.

Developing empathy not sympathy. Although five principals assert the need for high expectations, they also emphasize the difference between sympathy and empathy. All five

principals report that teachers often believe they have high expectations but fall short due to feeling sorry for students, specifically AA boys, which leads to teachers lowering expectations for AA boys in the classroom. Mr. Wilder states that, “Too many teachers working with African American students, specifically those from challenging backgrounds, take the sympathetic approach. Black children cannot progress when someone standing in front of them, doesn’t expect more from them because of circumstance” (interview, December 23, 2016). Principals discussed eliminating barriers to high expectations, developing an empathetic staff, and listening to the needs of students as critical components of their leadership style.

Mr. Jones took the time to explain the difference to his staff: “Most of the teachers, when I first got here, felt that they had high expectations. But they weren’t high enough. I tell them there is a difference between empathy and sympathy” (interview, March 31, 2016). Mr. Jones defines sympathy versus empathy to help teachers set high academic standards and manage student behavior:

It is alright to have empathy to understand what they are going through, but too much sympathy can allow them to get away with things you would not allow your own to get away with. If you will not allow your own kid to get away with it then do not allow them to get away with it! (interview, March 31, 2016)

He values these conversations with teachers and emphasizes treating the student like your very own children: “If it is good for yours it is good for them, and so those are the kind of conversations we have with teachers in faculty meetings, ILT, PLCs whatever it may be” (interview, March 31, 2016). Mr. Jones prioritized teaching empathy to his staff so they can set high standards that mirror the standards they set for their own children.

Principals reported that teachers often made excuses for students; this hinders their ability to teach students at high levels. Mr. Jones stated:

They [teachers] thought they had high expectations. They weren't as high as they should have been. They were making a lot of excuses for the kids. Even they had low expectations. They did not realize that the language that they were using. (interview, March 31, 2016)

Mr. Riley had similar experiences with teachers:

That is something that is preached throughout Douglas all the time. I think the difference between sympathy and empathy is if you are in anyone of our buildings. If you walk in we eliminate any excuse that you may have. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Riley described his personal philosophy as no excuses. He will not allow excuses to keep the students from receiving a high quality education as it is crucial to their success. Mr. Jones emphasized how critical it is to eliminate excuses:

Too much sympathy, you are lowering your expectations. You are allowing them not to bring in their homework. You are allowing their excuses to work. So I tell them no! That our sympathy— it kills our kids and shuts the door. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Jones believes that showing too much sympathy shuts the door on students' education and allows teachers to minimize their potential. Mr. Roberts asserts a similar belief of Mr. Jones and Mr. Riley:

Sympathy, is that I am feeling sorry for what is happening to you, and empathy is where you put yourself in those children shoes. I do want my teachers to try an understand where these kids are coming from. That does not mean to lower the standard, but you

got to try to understand and put yourself in their shoes. What they are dealing with and meet them where they are. Do not lower the standards or the bar. They are dealing with something and try to understand, and let us meet them where they are. I am not going to feel sorry for you and say you cannot do it. You do not have to do your homework or study or whatever you have to do that, and that's going back to having that relationship with kids. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Roberts reiterated the fact that high expectations cannot be achieved without empathy and building relationships. The student has to trust the principal in order to disclose personal information so the principal can determine to better serve the student in the school environment. According to Mr. Roberts, this information is a useful tool if you do not feel sorry for the student and lower expectations for the student's learning.

Empathizing with students to remove barriers. All five principals take time to listen to the needs of the students to help them persevere. The principals report that their empathetic approach is effective in meeting the needs of AA boys. Mr. Muncie describes a caring conversation where he empathized with a student:

They will let things out about we do not have any food, electricity, water, clothes so they are coming in here and they say: I am frustrated and upset because of things going on at home. I do not communicate with them differently. I let them express themselves without judging them or feeling sorry for them, but allowing them to vent. (interview, April 26, 2016)

Mr. Muncie is able to empathize with the student by engaging in caring conversations to and learn more about the student to help them succeed. This mutually beneficial relationship allows

the principals to empathize with students to gain understanding about students holistically. The students know they have someone to listen without feeling sorry for them who will help them eliminate potential barriers to their education. Mr. Riley also used a caring conversation to empathize with an AA boy struggling with the void of his father:

We had a new student come in to us. He had just transferred. He would come in crying every day. I had to ask the mother to leave the building. This boy came to school to Douglas and the first four days from a different school he was mad angry yelling at everybody so I brought him in here and had a breakthrough. He came in and opened up and asked me, "Did I have a dad in my life?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I have not seen my dad in three years." "Am I supposed to feel sorry? Man that sucks! I grew up in a household with my dad, but you are not the only one. Let's look at others in your class." They were in the library and I brought them all out, and brought them in here and had a conversation with them. I ask to see all the boys in the class, all were Black, and there were 19 of them. So we went to my office and I ask how many of you live with your daddy? No hands went up. How many have communication with your dad? Only one hand went up. Does my step-dad count? Any male in your life grandfather are whoever. I looked at him, they wanted to know why so I told them, and without prompting they went over and gave him a hug and he started crying again. You are not the only person in this situation. If one person can do it then you can be successful. I told him you are not unique and I understand and empathize with you and it hurt you, but you can get an education and not like your daddy and be like the other eighteen kids in the classroom. (interview, June 1, 2016)

Mr. Riley believes in removing barriers that students have in order to help them be more successful and not allow problems to interfere with educational process. This story described how he helped an AA boy cope with a pressing issue in his life by connecting him with others that walk in his shoes but still value their education. Mr. Riley described the process of helping students like the AA boy mentioned in the story:

I want to be very clear to never feel sorry for them, and I do not sympathize with students regardless of what they deal with outside of school. I have empathy because I can understand. I do not feel sorry for them because I feel when I start feeling sorry for them that is when my expectation becomes lower for them. Not having sympathy heightens my expectation for them, and that will get them out of the situation they are currently in. (interview, June 1, 2016)

Mr. Riley emphasized his ability to relate to AA boys due to his similar experiences, but makes a conscious choice not to sympathize with students. He believes that high expectations do not align with sympathy.

Mr. Roberts had a similar experience with an AA male student who was lacking a father in his life. At an afterschool event, this student approached Mr. Roberts about staying for an afterschool event although the student did not have the required parent/guardian to attend. Mr. Roberts went out his way to take him home in order to get permission from his parent so the student could attend. Mr. Roberts described their relationship and how he took an interest in this young man:

He was doing fine and then February or March he started having issues. I started hearing his name and I could not put a face to the name. I thought something is going on with this kid, so then I began talking to him trying to build that relationship. I started to build

that relationship because I saw him going downhill. I got the story on his family and background, which made sense about what was going on. I did not know he lived that close to the school. The rules are you are not supposed to come without a guardian or adult. He did not have anybody with him, but I did not want him walking home and something happen. I would feel horrible. I couldn't get in touch with her. I tried calling her, but I said I'll just drive him home. My hope was that she or his sister would come up here. I could tell he wanted to stay. It did make a difference in our relationship that day. I think its part of being compassionate and empathetic since I know what he is going through outside of school. I'm trying to strength our relationship and help him as much as I can. (interview, April 13, 2016)

Mr. Roberts understood that attending the event meant a great deal to the student, but did not allow him to break the rules. Mr. Roberts took an active empathetic approach by driving him home and getting verbal permission from the parent to serve as his guardian for the afterschool event. He believed that this extra step strengthened their relationship by not simply turning him away. Mr. Roberts was able to meet with the parent for the first time and build a stronger relationship with the child. This AA boy does not have a male role model in his life, but Mr. Roberts does not feel sympathy for him. Mr. Roberts simply removed a barrier so he could still attend by driving him home to gain permission and taking him back to the school to participate.

Mr. Riley, like Mr. Roberts, emphasizes removing barriers to maintain high expectations for students. Mr. Riley believes that over sympathizing will not promote high learning and self-discipline: "That whole poor baby syndrome and you come up and there is not anything that a kid that comes in this building that we do not have the resources, staff or compassion to deal with" (interview, June 1, 2016). Mr. Riley describes the needs of his students and how his staff can be of assistance: "I am

hungry today. Let's get something to eat. Well my dad is not home, well my clothes are dirty, well we have washer and dryer back there, we have plenty of clothes back there." After meeting the needs of the student, he then calls them to action: "Then I put it back on the student you are no longer hungry. So let's go get it, you cannot come in with an excuse that we do not immediately take care of it." He strongly believes that students receive so much sympathy from the community that it enables them: "I think the students in our community, which is the downfall of people, feeling sorry for you and feeling like there is no way out." Mr. Riley combats this downfall by making his school a place that eliminates barriers and empowers students: "We want to give kids options to make better decisions and whatever the issue is we will take care of it. What I can do for you right now for you to have a successful day?" Mr. Riley prioritizes removing barriers for his students; that is a key component of his leadership style to improve the education of his students.

All five principals strongly suggest that high expectations are a necessary component to empowering AA boys, by developing an empathetic staff. Mr. Wilder states that:

Black children cannot progress when someone standing in front of them, doesn't expect more of them because of circumstance. The sympathetic approach manifests itself in the form of poor work habits and behavior choices because expectations are lowered from the onset. (March 2, 2016)

According to Wilder, sympathy is a key reason that AA students often perform poorly academically and behaviorally; it is an indication of low expectations. Mr. Riley calls his teacher to action on this very idea: "We have to educate them or they do not have a chance to be successful. That is just a fact." (interview, April 26, 2016). According to Mr. Riley there is a lot at stake for AA boys and if they promote sympathy instead of empathy it could greatly reduce their potential to be successful.

Likewise, Mr. Muncie found it natural to empathize with his AA male students because he did walk in their shoes. He believes that his story is similar to so many of the stories told during the focus group interview: “That could be my story. You do not just stop; my dad left when I was six years old” (interview, June 8, 2016). Although he shares a similar story with many of his students, he used his personal story to motivate and empower AA boys by modeling success despite circumstances.

All five principals refuse to lower expectations for students due to their circumstance and consistently emphasize setting high expectations for students and teachers, developing teachers to understand the power of empathy, and empowering students to set high expectations. They understand the struggle of AA boys because they lived it. By removing barriers and empathizing with the complexities in the AA boys’ lives, the principals are able to set high expectations for them daily.

Serving as Role Models

All the AA principals found that AA males are seeking role models to build relationships with since AA male role models are lacking in the Black community. They take this role very seriously and intentionally hire male role models for their students. They use their experiences, style of dress, communication style, and cultural connections to building relationships by serving as a positive role model for AA boys. According to Mr. Jones it is a natural part of the job: “You cannot be around children every day and not consider yourself a role model. Whether you want to be or not they are looking at your actions what you do how you do how you say it” (interview, March 31, 2016). Caring conversations serve as a venue for principals to building relationships and effectively communication with AA boys while serving as role models.

Mr. Wilder discussed the need for African American role models for AA boys and this conversation illustrates the importance of cultural resources in understanding AA boys' circumstances:

When I talk to a lot of them I get personal with them. I grew up not as far away from where you from...Males have to be interchangeable we know what's going on with our Black boys. Our community here, across the state, across the country. I think it is important for our boys, especially AA boys to see strong AA role models. It speaks to possibility for them. What I see on the TV, radio doesn't define who we have to be.
(interview, March 2, 2016)

He asserted the importance of this role: "I try to uphold this [being a role model] every day with our students especially with our boys, African American boys need to see that positive person, and I being the leader in the school it begins with me" (interview, June 15, 2016). Mr. Wilder emphasizes being a positive role model with the staff:

It mainly begins with allowing them to see me operating with integrity, my interaction with them [students], and with staff members. How we should, could conduct ourselves, what it means to be professional, to take education seriously. All things I try to embody on a daily basis. (interview, June 15, 2016)

Mr. Wilder suggests that the principals help dispel negative stereotypes of AA males by being positive and professional in daily interactions with students and staff.

Similarly, Mr. Riley also considers himself a role model to AA boys through intentional positive interactions that show AA males in a different light:

My goal is to be positive and be a role model at all times and honestly to remain calm at all times. It trips students out. Very rarely do I raise my voice but I do. Very rarely do I get up close and personal, but I do. (interview, April 26, 2016)

Mr. Riley described how he demonstrated positivity in his interactions with AA boys: “I would identify 100% of my interactions as being positive even if it begins as being negative.” He considered these interactions as teachable moments for the young man while serving as a role model: “I am going to always try to talk you down...if you are doing something to harm someone or harm yourself. We take it to another level even with that. It is always teaching” (interview, April 26, 2016).

Prioritizing professionalism. Mr. Roberts uses his style of dress to influence AA boys by serving as a real life professional AA male: “Most days I’m dressed like this shirt and tie. I try to model a professional look for them...They do not see that where they come from or even on T.V. so much” (interview, April 13, 2016). He believes his appearance extends beyond the exterior and into the interior by demonstrating how you interact with others: “I try to keep a positive attitude at all times, and always try to be respectful even when dealing with students. I’m going to respect you and I expect that in return.” Mr. Roberts also teaches them the importance of following the rules: “I follow the rules in front of them. My rules are different than their rules.” The three values that he instill to the boys as a role model is: “Making good choices, follow the rules and dress professionally.” He asserts the importance of demonstrating this in his daily work: “I model for them when I’m dealing with them or adults with the same respect. Even when I talk to kids I let them know I have a boss. I have a boss, your teacher is your authority” (interview, April 13, 2016). His goal is to show him them a strong example of an AA male acting a positive, appropriate manner when dealing with situations in a professional setting.

Mr. Muncie also prioritized dressing professionally:

I start with the way I dress with my kids to be mindful that they need to be something different than what they see on television. They need to see it is okay to wear a dress shirt with a tie, a suit, dress shoes, not always tennis shoes—it is okay. (interview, June 8, 2016)

He also used his style of dress to capture their attention: “So I have a running thing with my students. I collect Air Jordans. I am an Air Jordan collector. I wear a different one every Friday” (interview, June 8, 2016). Mr. Muncie makes a cultural connection by wearing a popular shoe endorsed by an African American basketball player, but also confirms to them that dressing for success is important as well. He reported that his style of dress does make a difference and kids begin to mirror his look: “They come in on Halloween dressed like me. That lets you know you have influenced them in some kind of way” (interview, June 8, 2016). Mr. Muncie wants AA boys to associate shirt and tie with an AA male: “During the week, it is business as normal and I never want a kid to say why you are dressed up today. I always want them to see that it is okay to go to work and come in ready to go” (interview, June 8, 2016). Mr. Muncie wants to challenge the image of AA males that are stereotypical from television by normalizing dress attire:

...Our young men and families think being successful is playing sports on television for entertainment, and not necessarily being an educator. I want them to understand that as an educator. I come to work looking professional, and that is a career and setting a bar for them... (interview, April 26, 2016).

Like Mr. Muncie, Mr. Roberts values professional dress: “I normally wear shirt and tie Monday through Thursday, but I started doing something I got from a friend of mine who is an AP he does bow ties Tuesday” (interview, June 8, 2016). He also noticed change in student behavior: “So when I started doing that this year [wearing bowties] some of my students would wear bow ties and I would

take pictures with them. They are really watching me...” (interview, June 8, 2016). Professional dress is a leadership approach that principals value to model for AA boys how to dress for a career. The principals believe they may be the only person that is an AA male who sets an example of professional dress for the boys.

Expanding the number of male role models. Mr. Roberts made an effort to not only serve as role model but to bring other role models in for them to look up to: “I think it is very important that they see that’s why I bring people in visitors and guests. I think it is important that they see positive guests and role models and examples” (interview, March 23, 2016). He describes the homes of AA boys:

...there are not a lot of men around in the homes and not a lot of positivity. Especially the Black male image the news you see a lot of us getting arrested. Kids are hearing their stories and there are not positive Black males in their life. (interview, March 23, 2016)

Mr. Roberts combats the media through his hiring practices, “I would like a mixture of staff that reflects the students” (interview, March 23, 2016). Mr. Jones also asserts the need for a diverse staff of teachers: “There should be diversity throughout the school... Sometimes students, they come to a teacher that looks like them. There should be diversity in every grade and all students can see people that represent them.” (interview, June 8, 2016). Both principals suggest that role models make a difference especially for AA boys: They need to be able to identify with positive role models in the school building.

Mr. Jones makes an intentional effort to recruit more positive male role models for his school: “We started the Watch Dog this year, a program to get more dads coming into the building” (interview, March 31, 2016). He described the dad’s purpose in the school: “Their role is to foster positive

relationships with students. They work mainly in the cafeteria. There are some who have been in the classroom to peep in to see if teachers need anything.” He reiterates their main goal is to be “... another positive male role model in the building for the students” (interview, March 31, 2016). Mr. Jones summarized being a role model as a duty or calling through the use of biblical reference: “To one that much is given much is required... you can start humbly. You can be successful in life. If you look at being a principal as success you can be that and so much more” (interview, March 31, 2016). Mr. Jones expressed how seriously he views his responsibility as a role model: “I am role model no doubt. I take that with pride. I take that seriously” (interview, March 31, 2016).

Mr. Jones acknowledged the lack of positive male role models in the Black community. He asserted, “A lot of AA males do not have a positive role model to give them information, words of wisdom ... I have seen that take place it take time... if there is no male to do it. It just doesn’t happen.” He believes that a male role model can make a difference in a Black male’s overall experience:

I have seen students a terror at another school and not commit the level of problems here. I try to immediately build a relationship with the student conference with that student they are not perfect but it is nothing to the level where they were. (interview, March 31, 2016)

He believes it is more difficult to be a role model to students when a male at home is a poor role model. He described specifically an example of a negative male role model when: “...there is a male in the home that is not positive. The male is telling one thing how he wants it done and it is not the way I’m trying to teach him and there is a conflict there” (interview, March 31, 2016). He suggested that young Black male became conflicted by the information his father is telling him versus what Mr. Jones is telling him. The struggle ensued in regard to whom is giving the correct information on how a male

should conduct himself. Despite this struggle, Mr. Jones continues to provide advice to the young Black males because they are seeking male role models:

I have kids ask me. How did you become a principal? We are role models and we should be able to tell our students how to achieve some goals. Why else am I here if they cannot sponge off me and get some information. Again asking those type of questions being inquisitive I am excited about that. Those come from the boys more than the girls.

(interview, March 3, 2016)

Mr. Jones affirmed the boys need to make connections with AA males and be able to ask questions about their journey as professionals.

The principals believe that serving as a role model could encourage AA males to enter the teaching profession. According to Mr. Roberts, their positive impact on the boys and ability to demonstrate the respectability of the position may influence their students to follow in their footsteps:

I truly hope and pray that relationship we are building with our students, showing them that we love them and care. Taking time out to, I do not know how many times, that I have so much work to do, and one of my students was having an issue I had to put my work to the side. "Come on let's rap." One-on-one, me not just going to say I care about you, I am going to show you. You have an issue come on over here, and "Let's talk." It is hard to wait for a minute. So I truly hope that by us doing modeling that some of the young ones hopefully they want to emulate our profession and career in the future.

(interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Roberts summarized the impact that his relationships with the boys could have on their future. The principals spend a lot of time with the boys to help them grow and also help encourage them to become

leaders and possibly future educators. Mr. Muncie agreed with this idea of modeling for the next generation of future educators: “I feel we really are making a difference and we would like to see what we are doing to matriculate down to young men so they will want to emulate and want to become educators and give back” (interview, June 8, 2016). Roberts, Jones, and Muncie believe serving as role models can encourage more AA boys to seek the teaching profession based on the positive experience and interactions with AA male principals. The principals’ intentional servitude to the student, parents, teachers, and the community by serving as role models is embodied in the philosophy of all five leaders. The principal’s leadership practices and approaches are enveloped in the servant leadership philosophy.

Servant Leadership

All five principals reported attributes of servant leadership by emphasizing their calling to serve students, teachers, and parents. According to Flynn, Smith, and Walker (2016) servant leadership emerges when a leader prioritizes his follower’s well-being. Two of the principals identified themselves as servant leaders while the other three consistently used language that embodied characteristics of servant leadership. The principals described their position as a calling to work with AA children and their families.

Mr. Wilder believes his leadership philosophy of servant leadership is beneficial because he works alongside the people he serves:

I also consider myself a servant leader. I believe in order to get the most out of people they have to be in a side-by-side type of relationship rather than a top down. They have to see you in the thick of it with them and you have to be able to extend a hand.

(interview, March 2, 2016)

Mr. Wilder considers servant leadership as an asset to cultivate teacher buy in: “People respond better to individuals who follow that type of leadership and willing to extend that hand to help.” Mr. Riley asserts similar beliefs about his leadership philosophy:

My first and strongest attribute is being a servant leader willing to roll up my sleeves.

There is not one thing I’m going to ask a student, or staff member, whether you are a teacher, custodian, cafeteria worker that I’m not modeling myself or willing to do myself. ...I really think if you are an educator you need to serve. (interview, April 26, 2016)

Mr. Wilder and Mr. Riley prioritize engaging in the same work as the teachers to demonstrate the importance of modeling and their willingness to help all stakeholders. Mr. Riley prioritized servant leadership to all of his teachers. Although the other three principals do not specifically label themselves as servant leaders, all principals suggest that their work has a higher calling and purpose to positively effective their stakeholders. Mr. Muncie described his moral imperative as a duty to serve AA boys: “We our here for a purpose; a bigger purpose to help African American males” (focus group interview, June, 8, 2017). Mr. Jones joined the teacher profession because he felt he could make a difference: “The joy in helping someone reach his potential and learn was enough inspiration for me” (questionnaire, March 2, 2016). Mr. Roberts made similar remarks about being the difference in the lives of his students: “I really enjoyed working with young people and watching them grow. I want to be the difference in the lives of young people” (questionnaire, March 23, 2016). All five principals emphasized it is their personal calling to give back to the students by serving as a leader that believes in them and share their commitment to their success.

Emphasis on welcoming parents. All five principals affirmed the importance of welcoming the parents into the building and listening to concerns of students and parents because their acceptance,

respect, and support is invaluable to the success of the school. Their leadership practices prioritized an open door policy with parents. Mr. Roberts also emphasized welcoming parents into the building:

When parents come in I try to make them feel welcome and invite them in for whatever they need. Basically if a parent has an issue, I talk with them if they have a concern... I do not say to them they have to reschedule (interview, March 3, 2016).

Mr. Roberts emphasized allowing time for students and parents to voice concerns: “First and foremost I try to always listen to them. I truly have concern for students and families and I think they can tell that” (interview, April 13, 2016). Mr. Roberts spent hours writing individualized notes on his student report cards to serve his students in a personal, compassionate way: “...I write notes on report cards to let you [students and parents] know I’m watching and I do care about them” (interview, April 13, 2016). Mr. Roberts values parents’ time just as much as his students and is determined to meet their needs: “They have taken their time from something else they have to do to come to the building, so I sit down at that moment and have a meeting with them to see how I can best help them out” (interview, March 3, 2016). Meeting with parents is a top priority to the principals because they are able to building relationships and address their parental concerns that are important to the principals.

According to Mr. Riley, he prioritizes welcoming parents more than the history indicated at his school:

I think I’m constantly looking at data. Our parent satisfaction data, we got some good comment remarks, high scores from parents about leadership of the school to the safety of the school to the cleanliness of the school... We got high marks. I think for our parents that [safety] has been a huge difference. As well from my predecessor, they felt

shut up they felt they weren't welcome, they weren't allowed to come to the school. We need strong relationships with our parents for our school to be successful. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Riley believes that parents should be comfortable with coming to his school to voice their concerns. By welcoming parents to the school, he feels he is able to build strong relationships with his parents. Mr. Wilder explained his open door policy to community members and parents: "By being kind on daily basis, being welcoming, they are free to come in, ask what going on with your child in the classroom, able to come speak with me, or other administrators." (interview, June 15, 2016). Mr. Muncie welcomes conversations with his parents out in the community:

It is important that they [parents] know that I am not out of touch. I am in touch, I shop in the community, they see my face around, and if they see me out, they can come and talk to me. I am very reachable and very personable they can come a talk to me. (interview, April 26, 2016)

Mr. Riley articulated what these principals' calling means for AA boys and their overall success in school:

I think everyone is doing it because they have a calling, a mission, to do this work and, whether you are at my school, his school, his school or his school we see kids every day that looks just like us with struggles just like we had, but we made it through it and so you can do it. We set an example for them to push yourself it is not as it is supposed to be easy, it is not going to be easy but there nothing that is special about the four individuals before you but we did it. Every young male in our building that looks like us they can do it too. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Riley's comment described the deeper meaning behind the principals' mission to help young men that look like them recognize that they too can be successful: They are representations of positive AA males giving back to the community through a legitimate career choice. These men are apt to this position as principal to help AA males with struggles find their purpose and calling.

Each of these principals values serving their students, teachers, and parents as means of building relationship and using effective communication to improve student performance. Their love and concern for their student and families allows them to be trusted and respected which gives them an opportunity to further serve their students. The principals demonstrate servant leadership by lending a helping hand, welcoming others, and committing to AA boys. Mr. Riley commented on the level of commitment it takes to be an AA principal serving an at-risk group of AA children: "Some days you are principal, some days you are dad, some days a teacher, a preacher, some days you are teacher we wear several different hats. It takes commitment" (interview, June 8, 2015). The principals take on a variety of roles to meet the needs of their students by serving in different capacities depending on the situation. Mr. Roberts specifically sought a position to work with AA students in poverty because he felt called to these students:

When I applied for Carver Elementary last year there were seven or eight schools open at the time, but Carver was the only school I applied for, for that particular reason. I looked at the number and stats with a high number of African American boys. That was the number one reason I applied for that school. I have a high commitment to those students but really, for those students I connect well and have relationships with them that are very intentional as well. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Roberts' values the opportunity to work with AA children, particularly AA boys, because he believes he will make a difference through intentional relationships. Working with AA boys is not by accident, the AA principals feel compelled to serve students because they want to give back to the community that is similar or identical in some cases to the one they grew up in. Everything they believe and promote as leaders exemplifies serving others because they prioritize the needs of their students above all else. The principals' service to the students extends beyond the classroom into their offices, afterschool, and even into the community. Several of the vignettes demonstrated the parents and students reaching out to them to find answers to concerns in and out of the classroom. By establishing relationships with stakeholders and effectively communicating with them, they are able to serve their students on daily basis by making time to talk with them to determine next steps.

Conclusion to Chapter 4

The principals' core leadership practices: building relationships with students, teachers, and parents; caring conversations; and using effective communication, along with their leadership approaches: serving as role models and setting high expectations, are manifestations of their servant leadership philosophy. Servant leadership is the cohesive moral imperative that connects their leadership practices and approaches that permeated the study. All principals felt that their leadership is essential to AA students because they focus on student needs that are often forgotten. Mr. Riley suggested that without their leadership these students could get overlooked:

If we do not do it, who will? There's a chance that no one else will. I cannot just sit back and watch. If people did not care, I could had easy went down the wrong path, but I had enough people that cared about me. To make sure I was not out here getting into

trouble and steered me in the right direction. If I do not do it, who will? I do not want to take those chances. (interview, June 8, 2016)

Mr. Riley echoed the sentiments of the other four participants that their role is valuable because they are committed to the success of AA boys. Mr. Riley retold his experience of someone taking the time to lead him in the right direction and believes it is now his time to reciprocate as a servant leader for his students.

Servant leadership is the overarching theme that answers the question: What is the lived experiences of these five AA male principal post Brown vs. Board of Education? All five principals assert that they are servant leaders acting on behalf of AA children, specifically AA males. Servant leadership encompasses all of their leadership practices and approaches, allowing them to use their cultural resources and abilities to lead AA students.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Don't Believe The Hype
 Back
 Caught you lookin' for the same thing
 It's a new thing, check out this I bring
 Uh Oh the roll below the level
 'Cause I'm livin' low next to the bass, c'mon
 Turn up the radio
 They claim that I'm a criminal
 By now I wonder how
 Some people never know
 The enemy could be their friend, guardian
 I'm not a hooligan
 I rock the party and
 Clear all the madness, I'm not a racist
 Preach to teach to all
 'Cause some they never had this
 Number one, not born to run
 About the gun
 I wasn't licensed to have one
 The minute they see me, fear me
 I'm the epitome, a public enemy
 Used, abused without clues
 I refused to blow a fuse
 They even had it on the news
 Don't believe the hype

-Public Enemy (1988)

As indicated in the literature review, AA males continue to remain behind their white peers academically (Borja, 2001; Schott 2016) and are overrepresented in special education classes (Borja, 2001; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Tifft & Henderson, 1990). They are often overlooked for gifted and talented programs (Bonner & Jennings, 2007), and maintain low graduation rates as well as high suspension rates (Fowler, 2011; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). AA males low graduation rates directly affects the number of AA males in college, which in turn limits the number of AA males in education (Hale, 1986; Hozien, 2016; Noguera, 2003). AA boys' limited success in the K-12 setting identifies a need for further exploration of the complexities of their

school experience (Howard, 2012). The low number of high school AA male graduates is a cyclical problem that adversely affects the number of AA males in college and the number of future AA male teachers and principals, which provided the rationale for this study.

Discussion of Findings

The deeper meaning of this study is to examine AA male principals key leadership practices and approaches, and use of cultural resources that positively affect the experience of AA children, particularly AA males and their families. In order to examine the relationship between AA boys and AA male principals in an elementary setting, this study used a multi-case study approach guided by three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of five AA male elementary principals in a large urban district located in the Southeastern United States post Brown vs. Board of Education?
2. What are the leadership styles and characteristics of these AA male principals?
3. How do these AA male principals understand their ability to interact using cultural resources and cultural intersections with AA male students and their families?

The data analysis yielded six themes apparent in all five participants: servant leadership, building relationships, caring conversations, effective communication, high expectations, and role models, together these themes work as an ensemble to describe the lived experiences of these AA male principals. The findings of this study have theoretical and practical implications, each of which is presented in this chapter.

Theoretical Implications

This study sought to expound on the work of Lomotey (1987, 1989, 1993), Tillman (2004), and Fullan (2002, 2010). Lomotey's (1989) work established three characteristics of effective AA

principals in predominantly AA schools: (1) a strong commitment to the education of AA children, (2) compassion for AA children and their communities, and (3) confidence in the educability of AA children. This study extended Lomotey's research by identifying characteristics of AA male principals' leadership that emerge when interacting with AA male students. According to Tillman (2004), "Much of the research about African American educators and African American children is conducted by White researchers in White colleges and universities" (p. 299). Tillman (2004) believes white researchers have a limited understanding of the AA experience which produces research that characterizes "African Americans as emotionally, socially, culturally, and academically deficient" (p. 299) and suggests that research on AAs in education is biased and does not accurately depict AA educators and students. As an AA female researcher, the goal of the research was to uncover the voices of AA male principals and their experience as school leaders of AA boys to due to the limited narratives and studies of AA male principals in current literature (Brown, 2005; Lomotey, 1987; McGee, 1997; Noguera, 2003; Tillman, 2008).

According to Fullan (2002), principals of the future leading cultural change must be focused on the big picture of the organization and demonstrate the following characteristics: palpable energy, enthusiasm, and hope (p. 17). Fullan (2002) asserts that to sustain change the leader must begin with reculturing by "changing what people in the organization value and how they work together to accomplish it" which "leads to deep, lasting change" (p. 18). The findings of this research contributes to the extant knowledge base through four theoretical implications: the continued emphasis on servant leadership post *Brown v. Board of Education*, the value of AA male principals serving as role models and setting high expectations, the interconnectedness of three core leadership practices, and the use of effective communication and cultural resources to serve students and their families.

The six themes are presented in conjunction with the current literature on AA leadership and AA boys' K-12 experience. This study examined the principals' experience post Brown vs. Board of Education, their leadership styles, and their ability to use their cultural resources to impact AA male students.

Servant leadership remains post Brown vs. Board of Education. Although the Brown v. Board of Education ruling had a detrimental impact on the number of AA principals and teachers, the role of servant leadership found in this study affirms the commitment to AA children first identified by Lomotey's research (1987). According to Tillman (2008), AA educators were extremely dedicated to the growth and development of AA students pre and post Brown vs. Board of Education:

These Black principal leaders fought against theories of inferiority, funding structures that disadvantaged Black students, an emphasis on vocational over academic preparation, and the displacement of massive numbers of Black teachers and principals... In the face of these challenges, they continued to educate Black children, doing more than less. (p. 594)

Tillman describes AA principals' dedication to addressing policies and systems that impede the progress of AA students. The findings of this study indicated that all five principals demonstrated characteristics of servant leadership confirming the moral purpose of AA principals has remained despite the challenges since the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling. All participants were dedicated to putting their students first. The principals prioritized students' educational progress, an open door policy for families to express their concerns, and acted upon the belief that parents are an important part of student achievement. Every theme that emerged revealed a sense of servitude to the stakeholders in the school. AA principals' servant leadership extends beyond the school into the families and community. Lomotey (1987) asserts that AA principals are more likely to reach out to parents and

community members because they believe that stakeholder involvement is vital to the overall achievement of the school. In this study, the principals valued the parents by welcoming them into the school to voice their concerns.

Fullan (2002, 2010) characterizes moral purpose as an essential component of a cultural change principal who is focused on making a difference in the lives of students as well as by closing the gap between high and low performing students. Each participant indicated that they are interested in helping children through a holistic approach; they communicated the moral imperative to make a difference in the child's life and impact his academic achievement. The principals felt called to work at schools with high numbers of AA children because all of them knew they could share their own similar experiences with the AA boys in those schools. All acknowledged a duty to serve by their commitment to AA boys, welcoming others into the school, and lending a helping hand. The principals value their students and therefore spend time identifying and communicating the need for resources to meet the needs of their students. They take on many roles to serve their students such as father, teacher, or preacher to help students succeed. The principals recount other AAs serving as role models for them, so they feel it is their moral obligation to be a role model for their students.

AA principals serve as role models. Research suggests that Black educators serve as positive role models to their students (Howard, 2012; Kafele, 2012; Madkins, 2011; Milloy, 2013; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010). Due to absentee fathers in the Black community, many AA boys are in desperate need of a positive male role model (Earl & Lohmann, 1978; Kunjufu, 2007; Tifft & Henderson, 1990). According to Howard (2012), there is unique relationship between AA males and AA male teachers and school personnel. Howard (2012) describes this relationship and the benefits for AA male students:

The relationships are unique in that the congruence of race and gender provides the opportunity for adolescent African-American boys to expand the possibilities for self as

they negotiate the process of establishing an identity that feels most authentic and true to self. These relationships are further unique in that adult African-American males are able to sometimes help them understand what it means to be both African-American and male in society. (p. 385)

Howard (2012) suggests that their relationship helps AA boys develop a sense of self due to the similar experiences of both AA boys and AA male educators. Similarly Lomotey (1987) examines the relationship between AA students and AA principals and also identifies a unique relationship. Previous studies indicate that African American principals demonstrate a strong commitment to AA students (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Kafele, 2012; Lomotey, 1987; Murnane, 1975; Tillman, 2004). Despite adverse factors that affect AA boys, the five AA principals in this study were able to use their leadership style to influence AA boys with cultural resources. Principals recognized the bond that could be created through these resources and they leveraged them accordingly. The principals discussed the importance of their professional dress, emphasized avoiding stereotypical images of AA males, and invited more males role models into the building. The principals, like the extant research (Howard, 2012; Kafele, 2012; Klopfenstein, 2005; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010), assert that an AA male role model can provide students with a model of how to act, become successful, and build a positive sense of self to effectively navigate their everyday life particularly in school.

Serving by three key leadership practices. The findings of this study extends Lomotey's (1987,1989, 1993) finding that compassion is a critical component of leadership by articulating the interconnectedness of building relationships with AA students, teachers, and families, engaging in caring conversations, and using effective communication.

The primary leadership styles of the principals are building relationships, caring conversations, and effective communication. According to Fullan (2010), beside the teacher, the principal is the second most important influence on a student. Fullan (2010) suggests that the principal's role is vital to the success of their students. These principals carved out time to build relationships with students, specifically AA males. All five principals carved out time to build relationships with students, specifically AA males to positively impact their school experience. Lomotey (1993) described this holistic approach where AA principals "are not only concerned with the students progressing from grade to grade; they are also concerned with the individual life chances of their students and with the overall improvement of the status of African American people" (p. 396). The principals often take time to have caring conversations in order to build relationships with students and personalize their school experience by getting to know them and their families. According to Lampkin, Folsom, and Herrington (2015), "it is possible that principals have stronger impacts on student achievement than previous research suggested, and that those impacts on may be increasing as principals adapt to changing expectations" (p. 1). Lampkin, Folsom, and Herrington's (2015) review of nine studies indicated that "building strong interpersonal relationship with students, teachers, and parents" is a key leadership characteristic that is strongly correlated to improving student achievement. One of the nine studies, found that principals having one-on-one conversations with eighth grade students regarding their achievement on state English language arts test, corresponded with higher performance by students (Silva et al., 2011). Mr. Wilder, Mr. Jones, Mr. Muncie, Mr. Riley, and Mr. Roberts asserted that building relationship was a foundational component of their leadership style that helped maximize instructional time. Similarly, all five principals believed that their core leadership practices: building relationships, effective communication and caring conversations allowed them to help students make better choices and removing barriers to their success.

Serving through effective communication and cultural resources. The principal's leadership approaches, of setting high expectations and using effective communication, are critical ways that principals used their cultural resources and intersections to interact with AA male students and families. These findings expand on Lomotey's (1987) finding that AA principals have confidence in AA students to do well. Lomotey (1987) posits that "this confidence held by a Black principal in his Black students could be culturally linked and certainly could contribute directly and indirectly, to the success of his students" (p. 177). The emphasis all five principals placed on setting high expectations for students and teaching the staff to mirror these expectations reflect the confidence Lomotey (1987) describes.

According to Lomotey (1993), students are unable to make connections between their culture and educational experiences; therefore, AA school leaders need to emphasize AA students viewing the world through an African-centered perspective by incorporating their history into the education setting. Lomotey (1987) asserts that "AA students need to feel good about themselves as individuals" (p. 175) and AA principals can play a major role in ensuring their success by emphasizing their cultural connection. The principals used cultural intersections, such as code switching, to communicate with students about their school and home related concerns. Lomotey (1987) describe cultural interactions and effective communication as a homophily. According to Lomotey (1987), shared beliefs and cultural intersections are beneficial to the communication of AA principals and AA students, "this may be a desirable situation because this homophily may make interaction and exchange of thoughts and messages more effective" (p. 175). Culture intersections allowed the principals to make personal connections with students through the language of dialect, fashion, the Black church—all of which established the shared experience between AA boys and the principals. Lomotey (1987) states that culture is essential to the AA principal influence on AA students.

This participants routinely tapped into cultural resources to gain access to AA students and enhance their relationships with AA students and their families. When communicating high expectations to the students, the principals often referenced AA celebrities, biblical references, or slang that helped them convey a message to the AA boys of determination and resiliency. According to Lomotey (1987), AAs respond to situations differently than people from other cultures; therefore, AA principals will respond to disciplining an AA student differently based on cultural norms. These types of interactions were reflected in the data. Participants felt that they may have to discipline an AA child in a different way, but were intentional in ending these interactions positively so that the student learned from his mistake. According to Brown and Beckett (2007), “Black principals understand their predominantly disadvantaged African American students and families they serve and communicate well with them” (p. 7). This unique style of leadership and communication allowed AA principals to have breakthroughs with the students and help AA boys navigate difficult situations with teachers and other students.

Practical Applications

There is an apparent void in the number of AA male role models in the K-12 education setting; only 10% of principals are AA nationwide which illustrates the obvious need for AA principals (NCES, 2012). Only 8 percent of the teaching force is AA and merely 1 percent of the teaching force is comprised of AA males (NCES, 2010). Despite the low percentage of AA teachers, research studies suggest that AA teachers have a positive impact on the achievement of AA students (Borja, 2001; Lynn & Jennings, 2009; Murnane, 1975). The increasing number of AA teachers is critical to increasing the number of AA male principals due to the fact, that most states require a teaching certificate to become a principal (Roberts, 2009). Several research studies call for more research on AA principals and their impact as leaders (Brown, 2005; III Hilliard, 2003; Howard, 2012; Lomotey,

1987; Tillman, 2004). Practical implications of the present study speak to the ways in which AA male leaders and educators benefit schools and promote culturally responsive instruction. Additional practical implications include the need for effective teacher preparation programs, increasing AA males teachers in elementary classrooms to increase the number of potential principal candidates, and programs that develop effective leaders for urban schools.

Benefits of AA educators. In conjunction with the lack of literature written on AA male principals and the startling statistics on the limited number of AA male educators, these findings emphasize the need for AA male principals' leadership practices, approaches, and shared experience that influence the education of AA boys. The findings demonstrated how all five principals utilized key leadership characteristics and cultural resources to effectively communicate and relate to AA boys and their families. Due to the growing number of minority students, research suggests school teachers and administrators should reflect the student population (Borja, 2001; Brubaker, 1995; Hale, 1986; Madkins, 2011; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). Recent research from John Hopkins University suggests that AA boys' likelihood of dropping out is reduced by 39% and the likelihood of college enrollment increased by 29% if they have one black teacher (Will, 2017). This research study suggests that AA principals have an opportunity to make a noticeable difference in the lives of AA children. In the findings of this present study, the themes illustrated AA principals utilizing cultural resources and prioritizing daily caring conversations with AA children, as servant leaders committed to their overall success. Principals of all races could benefit from the leadership practices of AA male principals: building relationships, caring conversations, and using effective communication, and key leadership approaches such as serving as role models and setting high expectations, as these practices and approaches demonstrate servant leadership and positively impact, the AA boys. The principals'

emphasis on teaching teachers to communicate high expectations for their students could be replicated in other urban elementary schools.

Culturally responsive professional development. Professional development (PD) on the leadership practices and approaches of these participants could enhance the overall education experience of AA boys. According to Nishioka (2013), “Providing teachers with sufficient support and resources to implement effective classroom management is important... Those resources should include professional development in culturally responsive classroom management and strategies for teaching students social behaviors” (p. 50). By providing teachers of all races the tools to build relationships and effectively communicate with AA students could have a significant impact on AA boys’ student achievement. For example, the use of empathy not sympathy could be a relevant discussion for professional development of pre-service and in-service teacher as well as principal training programs. The AA male principals in this research study emphasized and prioritized this concept to empower AA boys. Because using empathy not sympathy is a core component of setting high expectations, this training could be part of a triptych focused on addressing personal bias, setting high expectations, and using empathy to support students instead of sympathy.

According to Banks (2016), reforming schools begins with teachers reconstructing their views of people of color by providing opportunities for teachers to examine their own personal knowledge and values (p. 241-242). Teachers must participate in professional development on cultural competency to “examine the value assumptions that underlie their personal knowledge, the knowledge taught in the curriculum, and the values that underlie institutionalized structures and practice in their schools” (Banks, 2016, p. 242). A focus on empathy not sympathy provides an opportunity for teachers and principals to address the lowering of standards for AA children, specifically AA males. According to Klein (2016), white teachers are more likely to have faith in students that look like them;

non-black educators are less likely to predict that black students will become college graduates. These types of biases could be voiced and combated through effective professional development about issues that are barriers to AA student success. Practical strategies for classroom implementation should be provided and paired with vignettes from principals and teachers who have had successes with using empathy over sympathy. The Multicultural Education Consensus Panel (as cited in Banks, 2016) suggests, “professional development programs should help teachers understand the complex characteristics of ethnic groups within US society and the ways in which race, ethnicity, language, and social class interact to influence student behavior” (p. 298). This professional development would provide insight on how to encourage and empower AA males without feeling sorry for them or limiting their potential.

Effective teacher preparation programs. The key leadership characteristics of participants could also be replicated in teacher preparation programs. Teachers who received this preparation would be more likely to enter the classroom with the skills to effectively teach AA boys and minimize potential problems in the classroom. Research indicates that students that have caring and positive relationships with teachers and principals who understand their backgrounds have fewer suspensions from school (Nishioka, 2013). Building relationships is essential to the principal role and could be maximized if this practice is internalized by the teachers. All five principals described relationship building as a non-negotiable in their buildings and believed that teachers who had positive relationships with their students typically did not have problems communicating with the students and their families. If this leadership practice permeated throughout urban districts, it could improve teacher-student relationships and enhance experiences for AA students.

Increasing male role models in elementary schools. The findings of this study illustrated the mutually beneficial relationship between the AA principals and AA boys. Several principals invited

males to their building to provide more male role models from the community in the school on a regular basis. All five principals believed serving as a role model enhanced the school experience of AA boys. Research also indicates a need for hiring more minorities due to academic gains as well as shared experiences (Borja, 2001; Dee, 2001; Lewis, 2006; Madkins, 2011; Pitts, 2001; Sanchez, Thornton, & Usinger, 2009). By increasing the number of AAs, specifically AA males, there is an opportunity to enhance the AA males' school experience and increase student achievement.

To increase the number of AA male principals faculty in colleges of education should begin with an intentional focus placed on recruiting and retaining minorities in the college of education, specifically Black males. The Call Me Mister program in South Carolina (Richard, 2005) is an exemplar for recruiting and mentoring AA male teachers: "The Misters... are recruited late in high school or early in college. They receive partial scholarships, leadership training, and academic and personal support if they enroll in the program and as they proceed through college" (Richard, 2005). Early identification of potential AA male teachers is essential to increasing the number of AA male principals, but a critical component is offering the support to retain prospective teachers and principals.

Effective urban district leadership programs. After AA finishing their teacher education programs, the next step is to mentor and retain AA male teachers once they enter the field (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010). Urban districts should design leadership preparation programs to encourage, prepare, and advise AA male teachers with leadership aspirations. The principals in the focus group were grateful for the opportunity to engage in dialogue with other AA male principals and proceeded to exchange phone numbers to remain in contact, illustrating the value of networking with others like themselves. Each group that completes the program could serve as mentors as they move onto leadership positions; according to Sanchez, Thornton, and Usinger (2009), "Administrators should see

every new hire as a potential future teacher leader, and possibly a future principal... Well-structured mentoring programs must be established in schools for minority teachers who want to pursue administrative positions and for new minority principals” (p. 1). Supporting potential principal candidates before becoming principals by advising them, and after the candidates receive the principal position to could improve principal recruitment and retention. According to Brown (2005), AA leaders are placed in struggling schools due to limited resources, lack of funds, low student achievement, and high numbers of uncertified teachers; therefore, it is imperative that AA principals are prepared through theoretical knowledge and practical experiences in their leadership preparation programs. Leadership preparation programs could serve two purposes: to prepare AA males for principal positions by discussing relevant theoretical approaches, and by providing a collegial network to help each other address practical problems of the principal position.

An emphasis on AA males from teacher educations programs to leadership preparatory programs could increase the number of AA male teachers who go onto become principals. Higher education and urban districts can form partnerships to provide the necessary support for AA male principals to continue to excel from student to teacher to principal.

Future Research Implications

To complement the research at hand, a follow up study examining the benefits of AA male principals on AA student achievement scores would address another dimension of the research. A mixed method study could explore AA students’ achievement scores and perception of AA principals of predominantly AA schools, and extend the research on AA principals and their leadership qualities, particularly AA male principals. The present study could expand the work of Lomotey (1989), to determine how an AA principal’s leadership styles differs from primary education to secondary education. This particular study only focused on elementary principals this research could be further

explored in the upper grades. Additionally, the lack of student voice is a limitation of this study. A case study that incorporated AA male students could capture their voices and add a vital component of future research to determine if AA boys communicate a need for AA male role models, or if they are able to identify these same characteristics in their AA male principal leadership style.

APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol

The interview consists of questions about your experiences as an African-American elementary principal in an urban school district. The questions will focus on your role as a principal, leadership style and expectations, cultural resources, and interactions with African-American male students.

Online Questionnaire

1. When and why did you consider becoming an elementary school principal?
2. Did you have a minority administrator or teacher in your education experience? Describe them and their influence on you.
3. Describe your daily routine Monday thru Friday.
4. Describe your reason for becoming an educator.
5. Order the following words by which one you identify with the most in your current position with one being the most identifiable characteristic (black, male, principal, role model).

Interview I

Background and Education

1. Tell me your educational background from elementary to present.
 - A. Where did you grow up?
 - B. Was your hometown rural or urban?
 - C. Describe your teaching experience.
 - D. Where is your school ranked in the district and state?
 - E. What is your school demographics?
2. Describe your knowledge of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling.
 - A. What do you know about African-Americans experiences pre Brown v. Board of Education?
 - B. How was the Brown v. Board ruling effected education presently?
 - i. How is this relevant to current issues such as School Assignment?
 - ii. How does the lack of minority teachers relate to this ruling?
 - iii. How does the achievement gap reflect the ruling?

Role of the Principal

3. Describe your leadership style.
 - A. What are your top priorities as a school administrator?
 - B. Describe your interaction with all students and specifically minority students.
 - C. How has being an African-American male helped or hindered you in your position.
 - D. How do African-American males perform in your school?
 - E. How do address the achievement gap in your school?
4. How do you go about recruiting and retaining quality instructors?
 - A. What qualities do you look for when hiring teachers?

- B. What would teachers say are your non-negotiables in regard to academic expectations and student discipline?
- C. Do teachers at your school use culturally responsive teaching methods?
- D. How do you ensure that all students are treated fairly?
- E. Describe the students that have the most discipline referrals and the lowest grades in your school.

Interview II

Lomotey 3c's

Commitment to all children

1. How do you describe your interactions with AA male students?
 - A. Do you use your own experiences as an AA to relate to AA male students?
 - B. Do you see yourself as a role model to AA male students? If so what does that mean in your daily work?
 - C. Describe your latest interaction with an AA male student.
 - D. Does your communication with AA males differ in any way than with other students?

Compassion for Student and the Community Where they Reside

2. How important is your relationship with the community you serve?
 - A. What do community members expect from you as a principal?
 - B. When and how often do you reach out to the community?
 - C. Do you feel that you have an influence in the community in which your school resides?
 - D. Do you live in the community in which you serve?

Confidence in the ability of AA students

3. What are your strengths as a principal?
 - A. How do your strengths help you motivate your staff to reflect your vision and mission?
 - B. Do your teachers' philosophies mirror yours? If so how is it demonstrated in their instruction and discipline?
 - C. How would teachers, students, and parents describe you and your leadership style?
 - D. Describe your philosophy of education in 5 words.

APPENDIX B: Focus Group Interview Semi-Structured Protocol

Background and Education

Sample questions include....

Describe your K-12 education experience.

Describe your collegiate education experience.

How have these experiences shaped your leadership style?

Commitment and Compassion for AA student

Sample questions include....

Describe the current state of AA male students in the U.S. education setting.

How do you feel about the academic achievement of AA male students?

Describe your level of commitment to AA students and AA males specifically.

What are the most pressing needs of AA males at the most basic level?

How and why are AA male students misunderstood?

Do you all have a unique relationship with AA male students?

How does your work impact AA males positively or negatively?

Role of the Principal

Sample questions include....

How do teachers help or hinder the achievement of AA male students?

What role do you play in AA males' education?

How has your experience as an AA male impacted your leadership?

How has being an AA male hindered or helped your ability to lead?

Why are AA male principals an underrepresented group?

Describe the collegiality amongst this group since you are all in the same area of leadership?

What is your role as a principal?

Do you have a moral imperative that relates to the black community? black students?

How do you feel district policies or programs affect AA male students?

Describe the demographics of the teachers in your school.

Are you engaged in mentorship of any kind of AA males (students and/or teachers)? If so describe this relationship.

Community Relationship

Sample questions include....

Do AA male principals have a tie to the community or a high level of respect since the Brown v. Board Education ruling?

Describe the frequency and interaction with AA parents and community members.

How often do you participate in activities in the AA community that serves your students?

Follow-up Questions (based on prior data collection)

Tell me more about....

I was wondering.....

What makes you say that.....?

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